GARDEN PUBLICATION OF THE YEAR

GARDENS ILLUSTRATED

Joys of summer

Alice Vincent's garden reads
Sarah Raven's top tips
Nigel Slater's inspirations

Lazy lawns

How to have a lawn without all the work

THE FAB 5

Glorious gardens to relax in from modern cottage to seaside chic

Fantastic Mr Phlox

Bring cool colour with this scented English classic

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Welcome

JOHN CAMPBELL

Summer – a time to down tools, kick back and chill out. It's time to eat al fresco, take naps in the deckchair, read and generally laze about outdoors looking at the plants you should be deadheading, but you'll get to in a minute. To aid you in hitting holiday mode, we decide to loosely theme this Summer edition of *Gardens Illustrated* as the 'relax and enjoy the garden' issue. So put your feet up and take a slow read.

Stop in at Sissinghurst Castle Garden (page 24) to see what head gardener Troy Scott Smith and his team are getting up to as the garden hits its flowering crescendo, and discover his secrets to maintaining the garden's allure during the dog days of summer. We also visit a new garden in southern Italy (page 40), where Urquhart & Hunt have created a breathtaking design across several terraces using colourful drought-tolerant plants; and Denmark, to enjoy the tranquil beauty of a family's low-maintenance summer cabin garden (page 70). Closer to home, we drop in on an enviable beachside design by Declan Buckley on the Kent coast (page 60), and we explore Perch Hill Farm with creator Sarah Raven to celebrate its 30th anniversary this year (page 78).

Jack Wallington has plenty of advice on how to have a flat green sward without labouring over your lawn (page 88), and John Little suggests some surprising ways to bring more wildlife into your plot (page 114) that have nothing to do with plants for pollinators.

All this plus nurserywoman Claire Austin discusses her relaxed approach to gardening (page 68); Alice Vincent offers her top ten fiction reads for gardeners (page 99); and Nigel Slater (page 35) reveals his magpie-like propensity for stealing inspirational ideas.

Stephanie Mahon

STEPHANIE MAHON, EDITOR

This clever beachside garden designed by Declan Buckley creates the perfect spot for summer lounging, page 60.

CLIVE NICHOLS

ONLINE THIS MONTH

If you'd like more of Nigel Slater and Sarah Raven, come to the special live recording of our Talking Gardens podcast at the Garden Museum this September – click for details.

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Contents

SUMMER 2024

Places

24 **High summer at Sissinghurst** As areas of the celebrated garden reach their peak, head gardener Troy Scott Smith explains how he and his team keep the interest going through summer and manage important tasks

40 **Lines of beauty** Designers Lulu Urquhart and Adam Hunt have linked a series of terraces using unusual collaborations and colour mixes of drought-tolerant plants for a garden in southern Italy

60 **Shore chic** Surrounding a contemporary house on the Kent coast, designer Declan Buckley has created a dramatic, high-impact garden that has taken on the carefree feel of the neighbouring beach

70 **Sea of colour** Generous drifts of perennials and ornamental grasses play the main role in this laid-back, low-maintenance Danish summer garden

78 **Golden years** Sarah Raven's East Sussex cutting patch grew from a simple desire to pick a few blooms for the house; three decades on it's now a thriving garden and test bed for her nursery's colourful blooms

Plants

14 **Plantsperson's favourites** Head gardener Andrea Brunsendorf chooses her top ten plants for summer

52 **Plant profile: *Phlox*** As well as offering highly fragrant blooms, this stalwart of the English flower garden brings some cool colour to late summer borders

People

35 **The garden chronicles** Nigel Slater has a confession to make

51 **Gardening talent** Meet landscape architect and gardener Andy Jackson

68 **Who's who** Award-winning nurserywoman Claire Austin on the joys of growing and her relaxed approach to weeding

114 **The big idea** John Little says it's not all about the plants

Design

87 **Design news** A new home for a Chelsea Flower Show garden

88 **Lovely lazy lawns** Clever ideas to help you keep your lawn but without so much work

97 **Sourcebook** Nine of the best tabletop grills

Regulars

3 **Welcome**

6 **Contributors**

9 **Dig in** With news of a new sustainable food and living platform, and the importance of allotments

21 **Kitted out** For long, hot days of summer lounging

38 **Subscription offer** Save when you subscribe to the digital edition of *Gardens Illustrated*

86 **Talking Gardens live** Join us for a live recording of our award-winning podcast, with guests Sarah Raven and Nigel Slater

99 **Fiction for gardeners** Writer Alice Vincent selects ten summer reads for garden lovers

110 **Crossword and back issues**

113 **Next issue** What's coming up in our August issue

JOHN CAMPBELL

Discover how the gardens at Sissinghurst keep looking fabulous throughout summer, page 24.

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SEE PAGE 38

COVER IMAGE

Summer cabin garden, designed by Tony Skovsende in Denmark. Photograph by Claire Takacs (page 70)

ON THE COVER

Joys of summer, pages 35, 78 and 99
The fab 5, pages 24, 40, 60, 70 and 78
Lazy lawns, page 88
Fantastic Mr Phlox, page 52

EVENTS AND OFFERS

- Save money when you subscribe to the digital edition of *Gardens Illustrated* – page 38
- Join us for a live recording of our award-wining podcast at London's Garden Museum, with special guests Sarah Raven and Nigel Slater – page 86

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Tommy Tønsberg
Tommy writes about the garden of a Danish summer house, page 70. *“I love how the designer has married native and cultivated plants in this little sea of exuberance.”*

Jonathan Buckley
Jonathan photographs Sarah Raven’s garden, page 78. *“Sarah Raven is celebrating 30 years at Perch Hill. It’s hard to believe I’ve been lucky enough to have photographed there for almost all of them.”*

Jack Wallington
Jack shares the secrets of a sustainable, lovely lawn, page 88. *“Lawns may be tricky to maintain but with some savvy planning they can be sustainable, great for wildlife and tough.”*

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ANDREW MONTGOMERY

ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Charlotte Harris
Charlotte co-founded the values-driven landscape design practice Harris Bugg Studio with Hugo Bugg in 2017. She has won three Gold medals at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, as well as Best Show Garden in 2023.

Fergus Garrett
Fergus was appointed head gardener at Great Dixter by Christopher Lloyd in 1993 and is now CEO of the garden’s Charitable Trust. He was awarded an RHS Associate of Honour in 2008 and an RHS Victoria Medal of Honour in 2019.

James Basson
James lives in the South of France where he runs Scape Design, a practice for creating sustainable landscapes. The winner of four Chelsea Gold medals, he was awarded Best Show Garden in 2017.

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Anna was *The Independent*’s gardening correspondent for 30 years and is the author of the bestselling book *The Tulip*. In 2000 the RHS awarded her the Veitch Memorial Medal. She lives and gardens in Dorset.

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Dan is one of the UK’s best-known garden designers. Among his many award-winning gardens is the Tokachi Millennium Forest in Japan. He was awarded an OBE in the 2022 New Year Honours for services to horticulture.

Sarah Price
Sarah is one of the UK’s most sought-after garden designers. She won Gold at Chelsea in 2012, 2018 and 2023, and was GMG Garden Columnist of the Year in 2016 for her design series in *Gardens Illustrated*.

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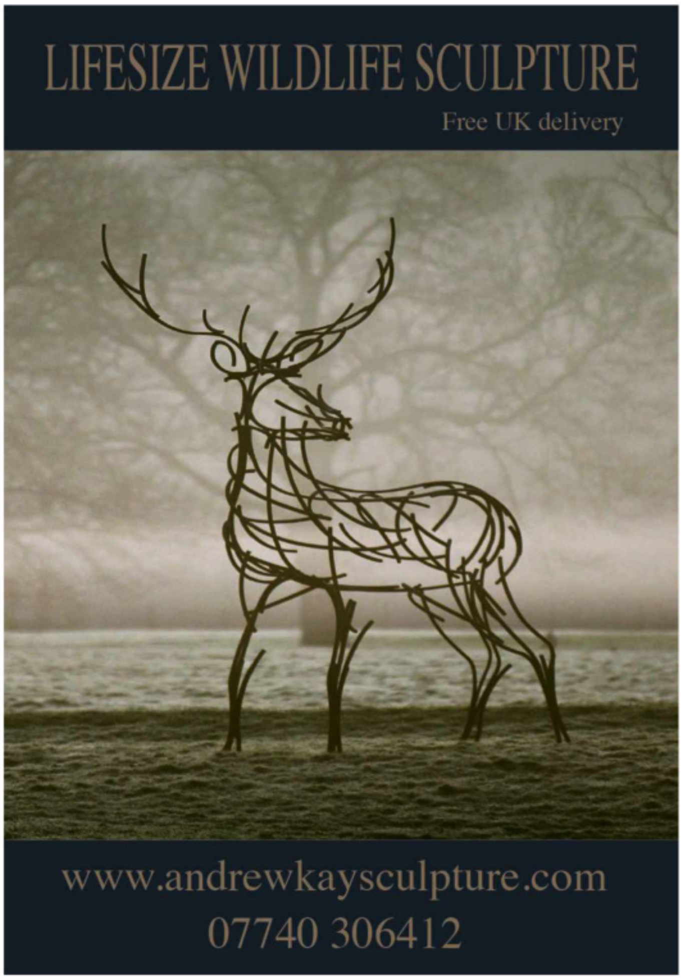

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DIG IN

What's new, what's growing and what's going on this month

NEWS COMPILED BY MOLLY BLAIR

REMCO MERBIS

COURSES

FOOD FOR LIFE

Ethicurean Life is a new sustainable food and living platform, launched by the team behind The Ethicurean, a Michelin Green Star restaurant outside Bristol that closed in 2023. Ethicurean Life is a way for the team to keep sharing their knowledge of modern food culture, and help people to feel connected with nature and food systems, through courses, workshops and community. They run in-person masterclasses at venues across the UK with experts in everything from foraging to fermenting, delving into the science behind the method in a relaxed way. For more information and to see upcoming courses, visit **ethicureanlife.com**

MUMBI MUTURI

Talking point

SPACE TO GROW?

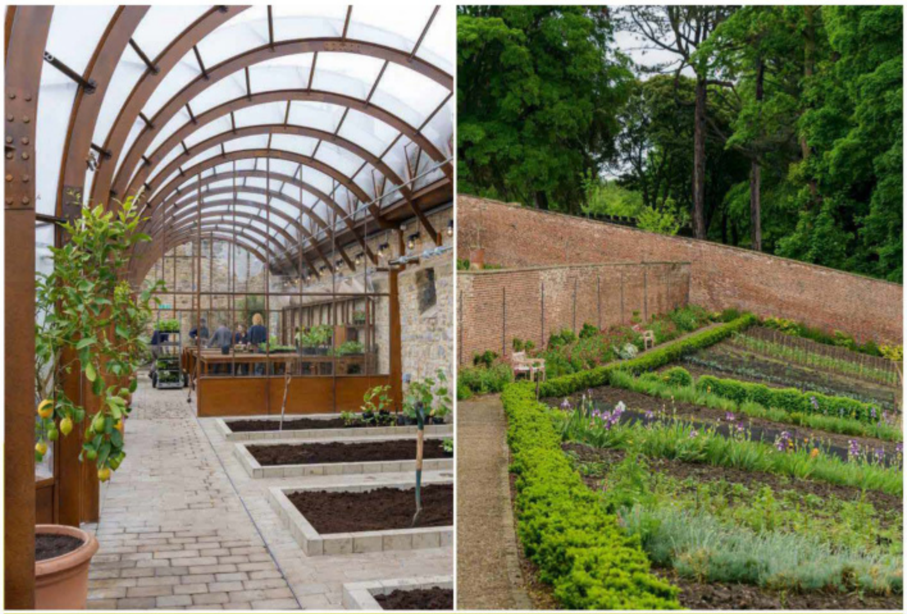
August features National Allotments Week (12-18 August), which encourages allotment holders to open their gates and highlight the benefits of allotments. “Low-cost growing spaces have numerous benefits for individuals as well as their communities,” says writer, allotments historian and artist JC Niala (above). “They have been shown to improve physical and mental health, increase biodiversity and stimulate engaged, active communities.”

However, allotments in the UK are in short supply. In some areas of London, you could be on a waiting list for a staggering 15 years. Niala and other artists collaborated with Greenpeace UK last year to uncover the state of waiting lists and found that 174,183 hopeful growers were waiting for a spot.

Councils have a legal responsibility to provide allotment space where it is needed – if six people from different households apply for an allotment together, their council has an obligation under the 1908 Allotment Act to find them a space. But with councils under so much pressure, can this even be done?

“A key reason that the Act is not well used is that not enough people know about it,” says Niala. “Another hurdle is that councils have prioritised other facilities, such as housing, over setting aside land for allotments.” If people band together and put pressure on their councils, this shortfall in space could be remedied, but there is a long way to go before supply meets demand.

To read more about the fight for access to urban land, scan the QR code below with your phone camera or head to **gardensillustrated.com/allotments-shortage**

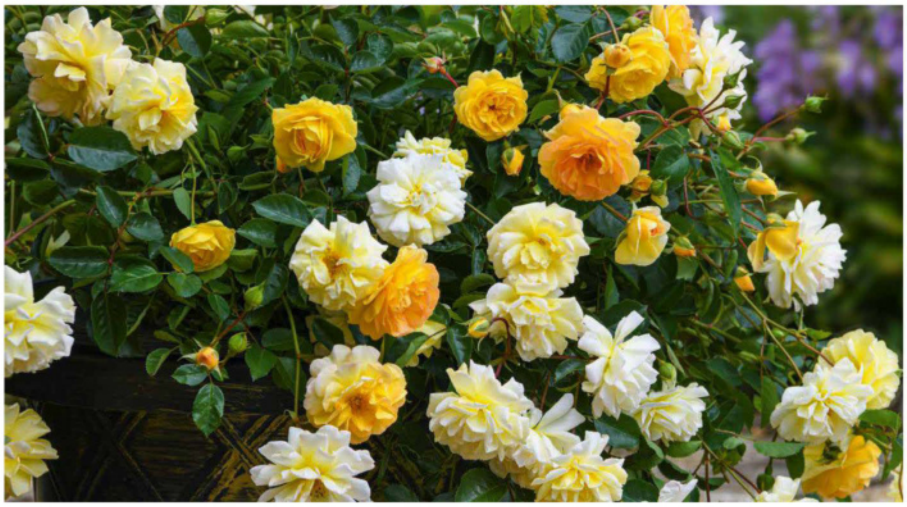


DAVID JAMES WOOD

DESIGN

Putting the awe into Auckland

New gardens have opened in Bishop Auckland, Co Durham, in the grounds surrounding Auckland Castle. Recently reimagined with help from garden designer and landscape architect Pip Morrison and philanthropic organisation The Auckland Project, the redevelopment has been almost a decade in the making. The castle’s Walled Garden, Faith Garden, Broadwalk and Wilderness Garden have been restored and a new Victorian-inspired glasshouse has been installed. The gardens reopened in May and are part of a wider project that will culminate with the Great Garden opening in 2025. Tickets for Auckland Castle and Gardens cost £18 and can be purchased at **aucklandproject.org**



THOMPSON & MORGAN

PLANT

A YEARNING FOR YELLOW

Thompson & Morgan has added several new shrubs to its range for 2024. Included is *Rosa* ‘Scentifall Lemon’ (above), which has a citrus scent and a trailing habit. Bred especially for containers, this shrub is perfect for patio pots and hanging baskets – providing lemon-yellow double blooms throughout summer. Prices start at £12.99 for a 9cm pot, which can be purchased at **thompson-morgan.com**

OUT & ABOUT

Fresh from the farm

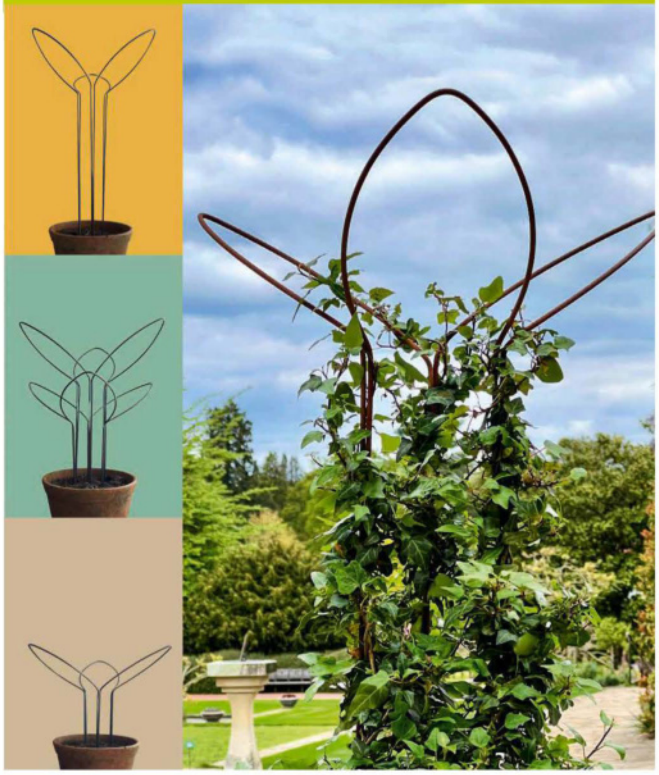
Book early for courses at Damson Farm this autumn. Take part in the Regenerative Edible Garden with Alison Jenkins (6 September) to discover how this approach differs from conventional vegetable gardening and come away with lots of practical ideas. Other workshops include Bulbs – Inspired by Nature with Hannah Gardner (13 September) and Botanical Inks – A Creative Day with Hawthorn with Babs Behan (20 September). Prices start at £120. Book at **alisonjenkins.co.uk**

EVA NEMETH

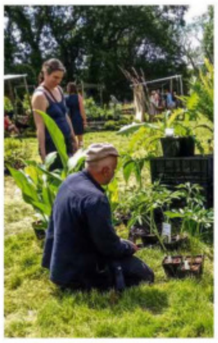
NEW BUY

LEAVES TO RETAIN

Handmade plant support maker Plant Belles has launched a new product range. The 'Leaf' plant supports are available in three sizes, and are perfect for climbing plants or as support in borders. Created in collaboration with outgoing curator Matthew Pottage to present RHS Wisley's National Plant Collection of *Hedera*, these supports have the industry seal of approval. They come in sets of three or four, with prices starting at £15. **plantbelles.co.uk**



WHAT TO DO IN... *SUMMER*



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26 JULY

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1 AUGUST

Summer Cycle A unique opportunity to explore Kew's famous gardens by bike, plus enjoy music, entertainment and a selection of food stalls. Thursday 1 August, 5pm-9pm. £24. Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Richmond, London TW9 3AE. **kew.org**

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Cover star

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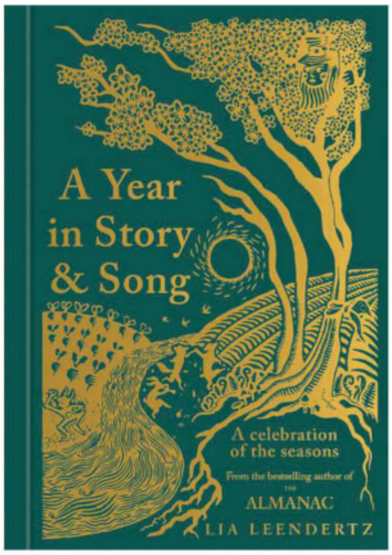

MEDIA

Story time

If you've enjoyed Lia Leendertz's annual series of almanacs, which celebrate the changing seasons through information on tide tables, sunrises and moon phases, alongside fascinating facts about feast days, folklore, and flora and fauna, you'll love this deeper dive into the folk tales and music of these isles. From stories of mischievous boggarts and fairies to sea shanties, love songs and carols, *A Year in Story and Song* (Octopus, £10) is a wonderful compilation of traditional tales and songs to help you discover more about our folk history. **octopusbooks.co.uk**

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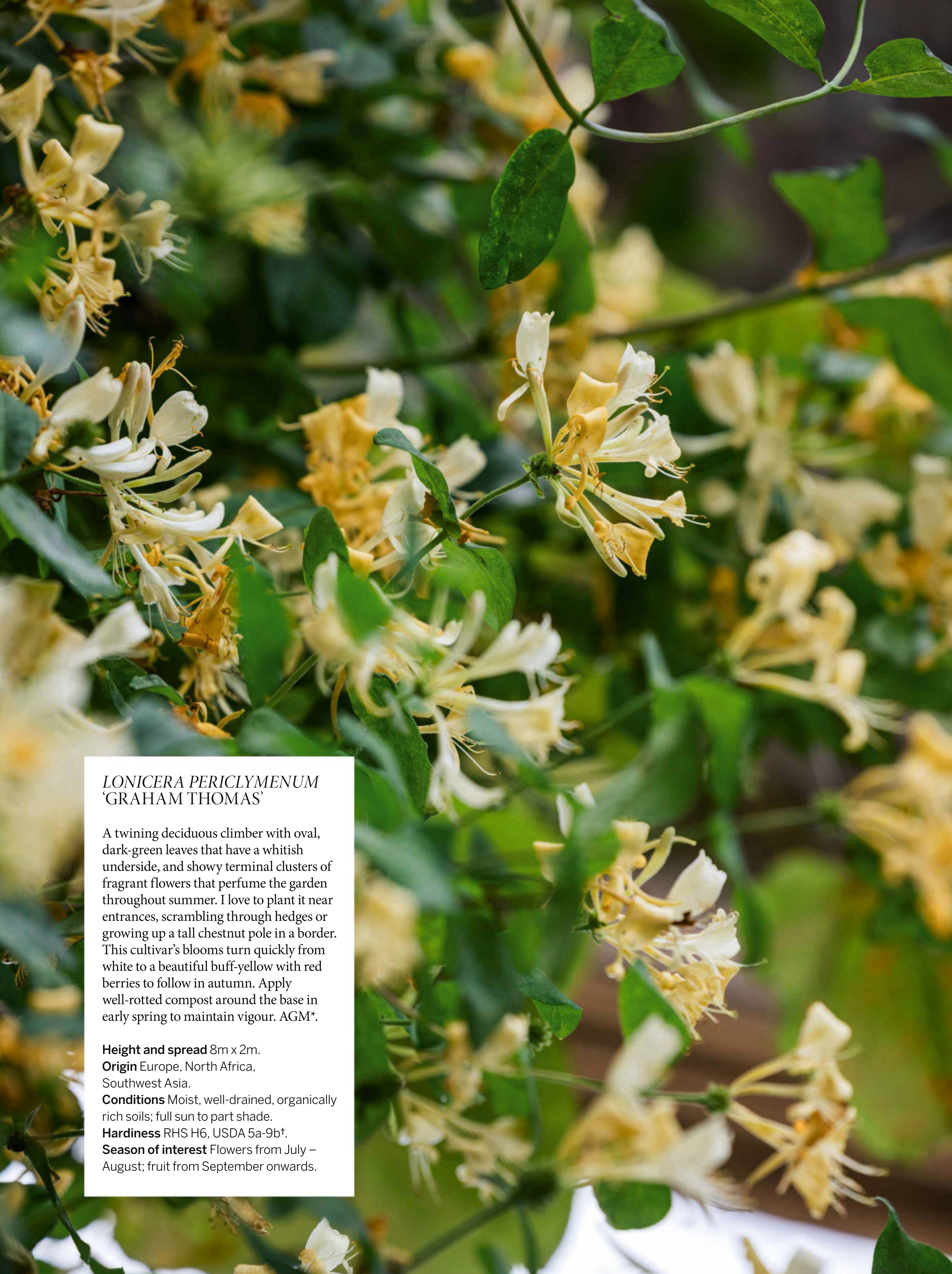


LONICERA PERICLYMENUM 'GRAHAM THOMAS'

A twining deciduous climber with oval, dark-green leaves that have a whitish underside, and showy terminal clusters of fragrant flowers that perfume the garden throughout summer. I love to plant it near entrances, scrambling through hedges or growing up a tall chestnut pole in a border. This cultivar's blooms turn quickly from white to a beautiful buff-yellow with red berries to follow in autumn. Apply well-rotted compost around the base in early spring to maintain vigour. AGM*.

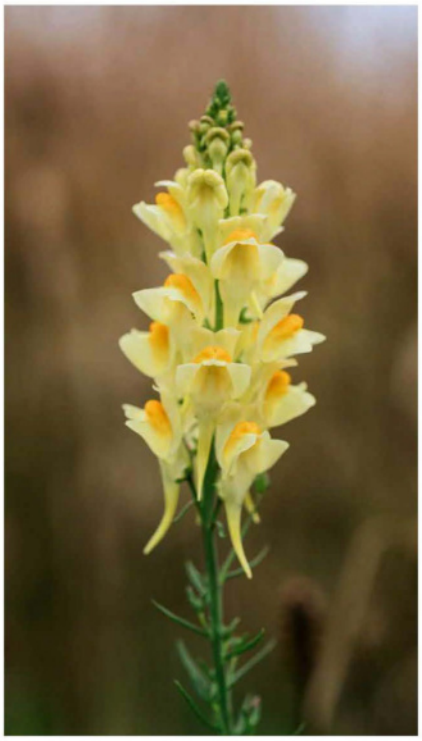
Height and spread 8m x 2m.
Origin Europe, North Africa, Southwest Asia.
Conditions Moist, well-drained, organically rich soils; full sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b†.
Season of interest Flowers from July – August; fruit from September onwards.

Andrea Brunsendorf is head gardener at Lowther Castle & Gardens in Cumbria **lowthercastle.org**

Summer plants

From a cheerful yellow toadflax to a soaring violet sage and an arching apricot-orange shrub rose, **Andrea Brunsendorf** chooses seasonal blooms that flower long and hard

PHOTOGRAPHS ANDREW MAYBURY



LINARIA VULGARIS

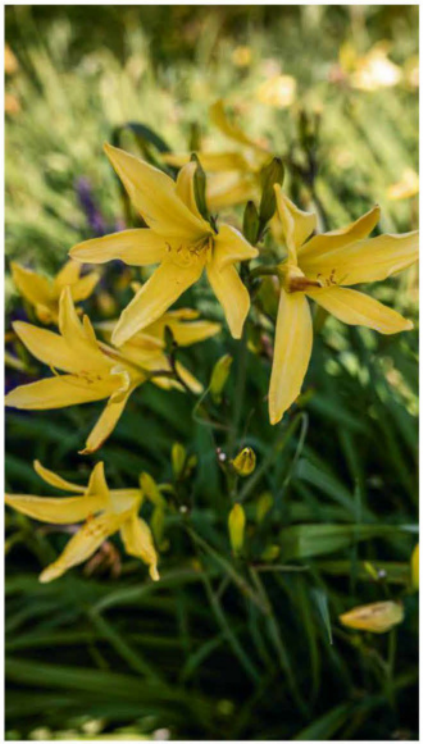
This beautiful wildflower, often seen in meadows and hedgerows, is a reliable perennial for any natural garden setting. It has a lax but upright habit, with narrow, pale-green foliage. The attractive, tightly packed, snapdragon-like flowers are a luminescent pale yellow with deeper orange throats. Sow fresh seeds in early autumn for flowering the following summer. Once established, it requires little attention; you could cut back the first flush of spent flowers in early summer to encourage a second.

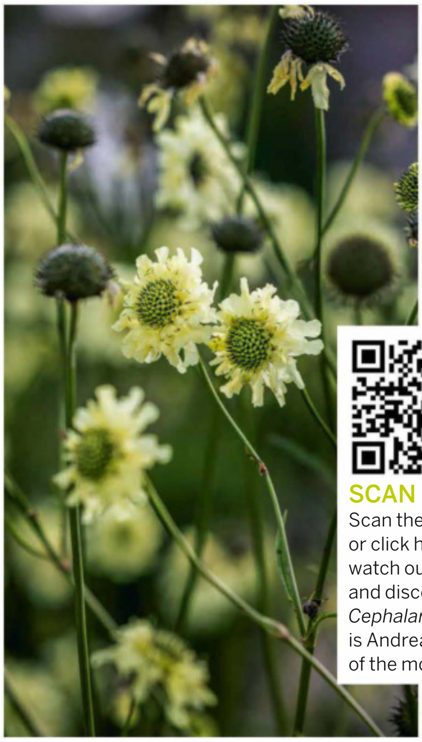
Height and spread 60cm x 40cm.
Origin Europe (including Britain), southwest Asia.
Conditions Moist, well-drained, light organic soils; full sun to part shade. Tolerates salt and periodic droughts.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.
Season of interest April – September.

HEMEROCALLIS 'HYPERION'

This cultivar is almost 100 years old, and is still, in my opinion, one of the best daylilies out there. It is a highly adaptable, easy-to-grow perennial with neat, vigorous, grassy foliage and wonderfully fragrant, narrow, trumpet-shaped flowers in a cheerful canary yellow. Fortunately, it produces plenty of flowering buds, so I can snack on them with impunity while weeding the borders. Their peppery taste can spice up a mixed summer salad. Attractive in natural plantings.

Height and spread 1m x 70cm.
Origin Garden origin (genus Europe to eastern Asia).
Conditions Moist, well-drained or poorly drained, moderately rich soils; full sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.
Season of interest July – August.





SCAN HERE
Scan the QR code or click here to watch our video, and discover why *Cephalaria gigantea* is Andrea's plant of the month.

CEPHALARIA GIGANTEA

This perennial creates attractive mounds of serrated foliage in spring. Later it produces slender, free-branching stems that carry numerous, soft primrose-coloured flowers, reminiscent of pincushions. The seedheads are also pretty and will persist for a while. I like this handsome, gentle, giant scabious for its self-supporting but still airy habit, its slightly wild appearance and vigour, and, most importantly, its versatility. It looks great in formal and informal planting designs and in natural grass areas, where it will withstand competition.

Height and spread 2.5m x 1m.
Origin Caucasus Mountains.
Conditions Moist, well-drained, moderately rich soils; full sun.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 3a-7b.
Season of interest Flowers June – August; seedheads from September.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.

White reaches its full potential as a garden colour in semi-shaded settings – it lights up beautifully in our castle ruin at Lowther

VIOLA CORNUTA ALBA GROUP

This mighty little beauty with its pure-white flowers has become a favourite, despite its reputation. It spreads rapidly with its semi-evergreen, mat-forming habit, suppressing the germination of weeds in Lowther's establishing Rose Garden. It provides useful early soil cover in our cold springs when other perennials are slow to fill out. However, it can swamp less vigorous neighbours and become a brute if not kept in check. Cut back in the summer to rejuvenate the foliage for blooms well into late autumn. AGM.

Height and spread 25cm x 50cm.
Origin Garden origin (species from the Pyrenees).
Conditions Moist, well-drained, moderately organic soils; full sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 6a-10b.
Season of interest May – October.

ROSA LADY OF SHALLOT (= 'AUSNYSON)

Medium-sized, repeat-flowering English shrub rose with a graceful arching habit. The emerging young foliage is reddish bronze, maturing to mid-green. The chalice-shaped flowers, made up of about 60 loosely arranged petals, are a pleasing apricot-orange with flushes of salmon-pink on the outer petals. It is prized for its outstanding long-flowering performance and good disease resistance. Considered one of the best David Austin roses, it makes an excellent cut flower. One of my favourites of the 30-odd cultivars we grow in Lowther's Rose Garden. AGM.

Height and spread 1.5m x 1.25m.
Origin Garden origin.
Conditions Moist, well-drained, organically rich soils; full sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.
Season of interest May – early frosts.

CAMPANULA LATIFOLIA VAR. *MACRANTHA* 'ALBA'

A slightly archaic choice that is pleasingly old-fashioned. A tall, robust flowering stem rises from a leafy rosette carrying showy, pure-white bells. Looks best in natural drifts in semi-shade, where white reaches its full potential as a garden colour – it lights up beautifully in our castle ruin. It copes well with root pressure, and should the soil dry out, it will recede for the rest of the season once it has flowered – an adaptation to hot summers in its native climes.

Height and spread 1m x 50cm.
Origin Natural selection of *C. latifolia* (Europe, western Asia).
Conditions Moist, well-drained, moderately organic soils; full sun to part shade. Tolerates periods of drought.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.
Season of interest June – August.

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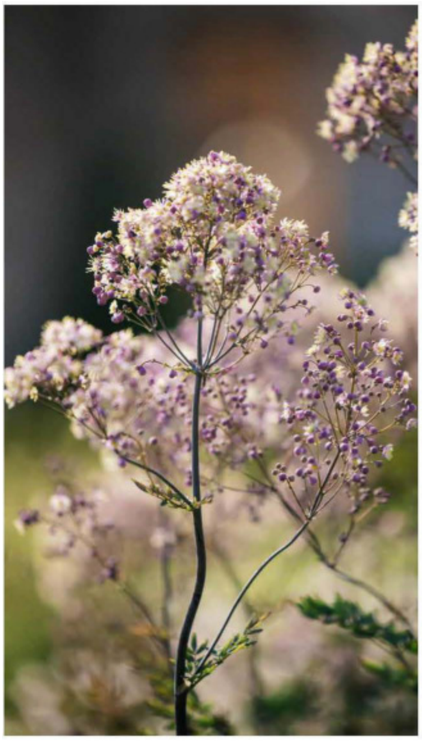
You don't often see *Salvia pratensis* 'Indigo', but once you do, you will understand why it's my favourite out of all the fashionable choices of salvia



THALICTRUM 'ELIN'

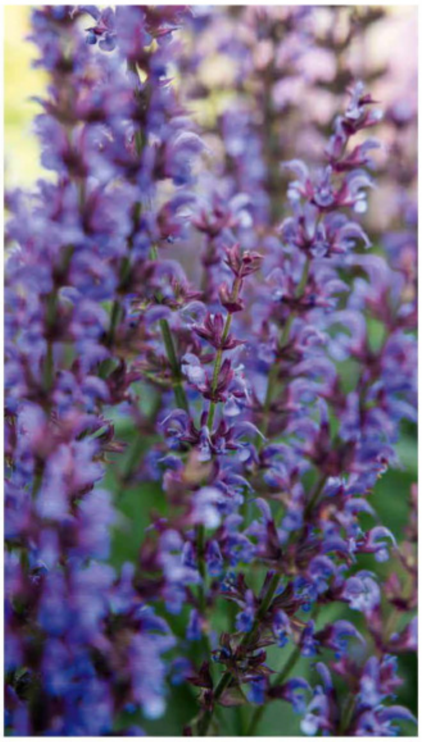
This towering meadow rue makes a real statement on Lowther's Tapestry Parterre. Its glaucous, purplish, aquilegia-like foliage and flowering stems are eye-catching as they race to the sky. This perennial also creates lovely lavender clouds with its graceful flowers. You can use it in the front as well as the back of a border since it maintains a splendid lower skirt of leaves. Plant in large groups for effect and stake when grown in part shade or on windy and summer-wet sites. AGM.

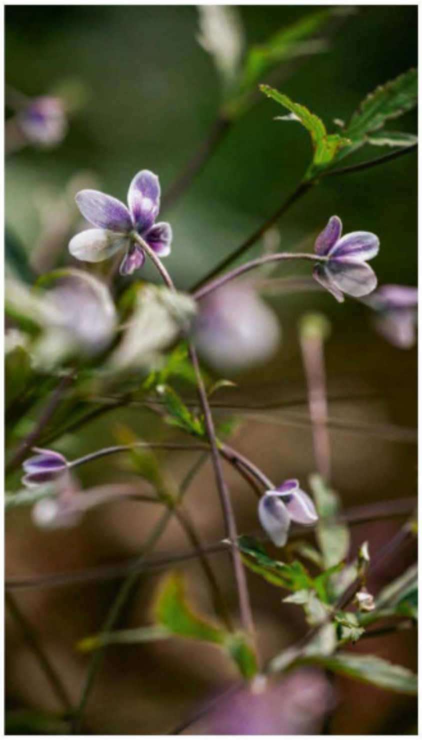
Height and spread 2.5m x 70cm.
Origin Sterile hybrid between *Thalictrum flavum* subsp. *glaucum* (southwest Europe) and *T. rochebruneanum* (Japan).
Conditions Moisture-retentive, organically rich soils; full sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-7b.
Season of interest Foliage from April onwards; flowers from June – August.

SALVIA PRATENSIS 'INDIGO'

You don't often see this cultivar, but once you discover it, you will understand why it's my favourite out of all the fashionable choices of salvia. It has long, elegant flower spikes, with attractive large, deep-violet-blue flowers and brownish-red calyces arranged in evenly spaced whorls. Beautiful in any flower arrangement. Bees can't resist it, and neither can the rabbits, which, unfortunately, are not put off by its coarse and very aromatic foliage. This sage is a fully hardy perennial that has so far weathered even our wettest winters. AGM.

Height and spread 90cm x 50cm.
Origin Garden origin (species from Europe, including Britain).
Conditions Moist, well-drained, moderately organic soils; full sun. Tolerates periods of drought.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.
Season of interest May – August.





ANEMONE RIVULARIS

A vigorous perennial with deeply trilobed foliage, topped with masses of small, star-shaped flowers borne on lax, branching stalks. The backs of the white petals have a metallic-blue tinge that mirrors steely coloured anthers in the centre of the flower. They look great in large drifts in rockeries, but for me they work best as a woodlander. Sow fresh seeds in early autumn, so they will germinate well after the winter cold. They will self-seed in favourable conditions or you can divide clumps before they die down for the season.

Height and spread 70cm x 40cm.
Origin Himalaya, southwestern China and northern India.
Conditions Moist, well-drained, organically rich soils; full sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 4a-8b.
Season of interest May – July.

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In high summer, the Cottage Garden at Sissinghurst is a riot of colour. The large, dark leaves of *Canna* 'Wyoming' and bright-red flowers of *Crocosmia* 'Lucifer', alongside orange daylily blooms, bring not only hot colours but lush foliage to give the space a jungle-like feel. Old cultivars also feature, including peachy-red *Lathyrus odoratus* 'Henry Eckford', bred in 1906, and, far right, rusty-hued *Helenium* 'Moerheim Beauty'.

High summer at Sissinghurst

As the garden's hot borders reach their seasonal peak, head gardener Troy Scott Smith shows how he and his team keep the interest going through summer and manage important tasks

PHOTOGRAPHS **JOHN CAMPBELL**

Beds and borders reach their peak in high summer. The planting is at its most exuberant, the light at its most intense, and the colours at their most saturated

High to late summer is a time of transition at Sissinghurst. The intensity of the planting in spring and early summer is replaced with a languid, delightfully slow-moving feeling.

Beds and borders reach their peak in high summer and are held, helped here and there by a gardener's hand. Or perhaps we will pop in a flowering plant to give an injection of colour. From July through to September, the planting is at its most exuberant, the light at its most intense and the colours at their most saturated. As we move towards the end of the season, our thoughts and actions are firmly focused on the future, learning and improving on this year for the next. But at Sissinghurst the past is never forgotten.

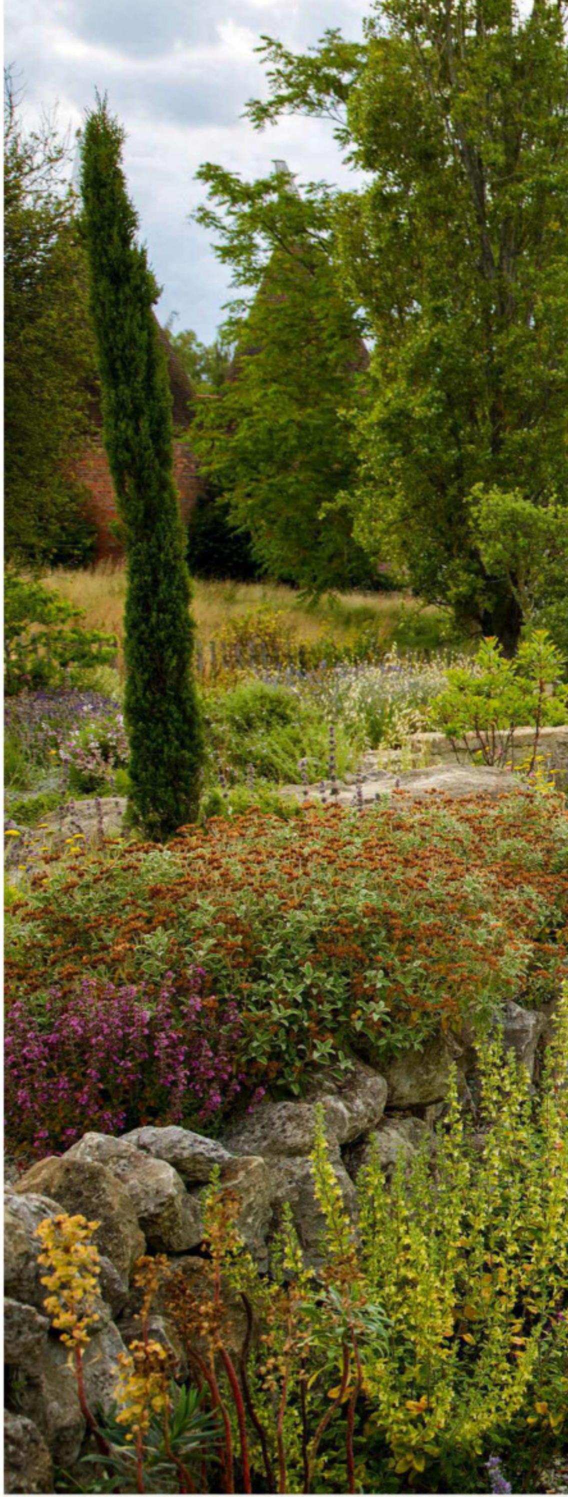
High summer in the Orchard sees us returning to an age-old craft to cut our hay. Scything in the summer sun, hayricks drying, it's hard not to feel the strong ties to the garden of Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson. Scything is a task that is in tune with the seasons and of the land. It's a pastoral, simpler, slower way of gardening and living, and one memorably described by Vita in her poem, *The Garden*:
'What pleasant sounds: the scythe in the wet grass/ Where ground's too rough for the machine to pass,/ Grass should be wet for a close cut, the blade/ Hissing like geese as swathe by swathe is laid;/ The pigeons on the roof, the hives as warm;/ July is the month of sounds. They melt and merge/ Softer than shallow waves in pebbled surge/ Forward and backward in a summer cove;/ The very music of the month is warm,/ The very music sings the song of love.'

The Cottage Garden, also known as the Sunset Garden, was a favourite with both Vita and Harold – the innermost of what Harold called Sissinghurst's 'succession of privacies'. It is an intimate, enclosed space and although visually connected to the rest of Sissinghurst, it feels secluded and private.

Foliage underpins any planting; it acts as a wonderful prelude to the floral element, providing a base note to the entire scheme, but for Vita and for me it is the subtle use of colour that sets the planting in this part of the garden apart.

Vita carefully restricted her planting to variations of orange, red and yellow. In spring the plants are low, but they generously fill ▷

To continue turn to page 30



Main image
In the Greek island-inspired Delos garden, *Cupressus sempervirens* Stricta Group adds a vertical line, loved by Vita and Harold, echoed in the soaring poplar behind. *Spartium junceum*, or Spanish broom, is a quick growing nurse crop in the garden's Mediterranean hedge, offering scented yellow blooms and narrow upright foliage.

Bottom row from left
Bred and introduced as early as 1904, *Lathyrus odoratus* 'Flora Norton' is a clear mauve-blue flowering sweet pea with a delicious scent. Here it is combined with the reddish-purple, double flowers of *Clematis* 'Purpurea Plena Elegans' and the fresh white blooms of *Rosa* 'Alister Stella Gray'.

Sweet peas for cutting are grown en masse in Sissinghurst's Vegetable Garden, where they are supported on hazel wigwams and tied with hop bine.

A bronze bagatelle urn, filled with *Glandularia* 'Sissinghurst', is surrounded by *Salvia rosmarinus* 'Sissinghurst Blue', a form selected by Vita that has particularly narrow leaves, with *Erigeron karvinskianus* seeding at its feet.

SEASONAL TASKS AT SISSINGHURST

Ordering bulbs

Bulbs are generally despatched three times a year: spring-flowering bulbs in September/October; summer-flowering bulbs in February/March; and late summer/early autumn-flowering bulbs in August. Consequently, you need to be on watch as to when the various types should be ordered. I set myself a deadline of 1 August for ordering spring-flowering bulbs, so I can be sure I'll get my chosen varieties before they sell out.

Try not to buy on impulse. Too many times I have bought like a child in a sweet shop and then regretted it – with the bulbs rotting away unplanted in their bags. Be prepared for when your bulbs arrive. Take time to sort and allocate them into planting locations, labelling for future ease. Before planting we store our bulbs in a dry, frost-free and mouse-free shed.

Sowing and growing biennials

There is something very satisfying about raising your own plants, whether from cuttings or seed. Biennials such as foxgloves and teasels are plants that produce leaves in the first year and in the second year flower, set seed and die. Biennials can be left to self-seed, but for greater control I find it is better to propagate seeds in pans each year. The principles of sowing are the same as that of the annuals, but the aftercare and timing are different. While most annuals are sown from January to April, biennials are sown in June, planted into nursery rows in August and placed in their final position in autumn.

Pruning apple espaliers

The fruit trees at Sissinghurst flower at different times. Plums stir into life in March, pears in April, and finally in May the swollen buds of apples rupture to reveal their delicate white blossom. During the summer, pruning consists of only shortening the side shoots to five or so buds to allow more light and air to reach the fruit. Use secateurs to shorten all side shoots coming off the horizontal laterals to 4-5cm (spur-pruning). This will stimulate flower and fruit buds for the following season. Every three years in winter, remove some of these old spurs with a folding pruning saw to allow room for the fruit to develop and ripen.

Staking

The ideal staking will gently support the plant, while still allowing it to take on its natural shape, form and habit. A certain amount of skill and patience is required and an intimate knowledge of each plant's growth. Timing is everything: stake too soon and the support will be visible; too late and the stems will have collapsed into something resembling a curled-up Yorkshire terrier. I prefer to use hazel (*Corylus avellana*) for staking. Stakes should be of sufficient strength and size to support the plant, and be inserted when the plant has reached two-thirds of its ultimate height, pushing the stakes in to about 10cm above the plant's head, and tying in. If you've left it late, like me with this sunflower (right), you can use a shorter stick at the plant's base, to support it where it is weakest.

Plants can also support each other. In the past, I have used the stiff, upright stems of *Verbena bonariensis* to support *Dahlia* 'Bishop of Llandaff' and the stout *Astrantia major* 'Buckland' to support the herbaceous *Clematis integrifolia* 'Rosea'.

Cutting back

As a rule, any perennial that flowers before midsummer's day can, and should, be cut down to the ground as soon as it has finished flowering. Given sufficient moisture, new growth and some new flowers will soon reappear. If you leave these plants uncut, then come August the garden will be looking brown, tired and over.

Hay making

In late summer we cut down the long grass in the Orchard to make hay for our tenant farmer to use later in the year, using a scythe, which cuts the flowers and grass whole. Once it's cut, we turn the hay and leave it to dry for three to seven days, depending on weather conditions, before we collect it. This is important, not only because it gives insects the chance go back down into the turf but also because it allows wildflowers such as yellow rattle to shed their ripe seeds. Once the hay is dry, we collect it using rakes and hessian sheets to make traditional hayricks, then use a harrow tool to open bare patches of soil, so seeds can re-populate the meadow.

Pruning wisteria

You can remove the spent flower spikes of wisteria (simply snip them off at the base) but at this time of year, the key thing is to remove the long, leafy new growth that is taking the energy and light from the developing buds that will flower next spring. Cut the new growth back by around two-thirds, to a length of around seven inches. An easy rule of thumb is to remember to cut back new growth to seven inches (around 18cm) in the seventh month.

WATCH OUR HOW-TO VIDEO

To see how Troy summer prunes wisteria, you can watch our video by scanning this QR code with your phone camera, or go to **gardensillustrated.com/how-to-prune-wisteria**

Staking

Cutting back

Pruning wisteria

In late summer we cut down the long grass in the Orchard using a scythe, which cuts the flowers and grass whole

Hay making

> In summer you can feel your pulse racing as the garden throbs in a tidal wave of colour. Everywhere fat cushions of flower and foliage sprawl and spill over paths, lending a romantic luxuriance

▷ the beds so that everywhere fat cushions of flower and foliage sprawl and spill over paths, lending a romantic luxuriance. Heaps of yellow *Helianthemum* 'Wisley Primrose', scarlet *Geum* 'Blazing Sunset' and bright-orange *Trollius chinensis* 'Golden Queen' are punctuated with broad swathes of the dark, dusky wallflowers *Erysimum* 'Blood Red' and *E.* 'Fire King', and just enough foliage from bearded irises and the daylily *Hemerocallis lilioasphodelus*. The sultry wine-coloured flowers of *Rosa* 'Dusky Maiden' are in turn echoed by the purple-coloured leaves of *Canna* 'Wyoming'. Liberal dollops of the native field poppy, *Papaver rhoeas*, knit the whole thing together.

In summer you can feel your pulse racing as the garden throbs in a tidal wave of colour, none more spectacular than the amazing vermilion-coloured flowers of *Crocosmia* 'Lucifer' in tandem with *Dahlia* 'Brandaris'. Dahlias were a favourite of Harold's and the Cottage Garden features *D.* 'Yellow Hammer', bright-orange *D.* 'East Court', gentle-orange *D.* 'Autumn Lustre', red *D. coccinea* and lemon-yellow *D.* 'Glorie van Heemstede'.

Tender shrubby salvias such as *S. fulgens* are also an important element, together with clusters of flatheads of achilleas. The accents are provided by red hot pokers, which Vita liked and Harold hated; the incredibly tall and striking *Iris spuria*, standing nearly 2m tall; and substantial plantings of *Verbascum bombyciferum* 'Polarsommer' and our own Cottage Garden hybrid, raised annually from seed collected by the gardeners. Knitting this Rousseauesque planting together is the light and airy *Patrinia scabiosifolia*. The chrome-yellow coloured flowers punctuate the air like a swarm of hovering flies.

Recently we have introduced the fantastic *Moraea huttonii* to the planting scheme. A relative of the iris family from the high mountains of South Africa, it has tall, wiry stems up to 1.2m high, which hold numerous sweetly scented yellow flowers with curious brown markings. Huge drifts hang over the lower-storey planting like sheets of faded muslin, alongside bronze fennel, *Foeniculum vulgare* 'Purpureum'. ◻

USEFUL INFORMATION

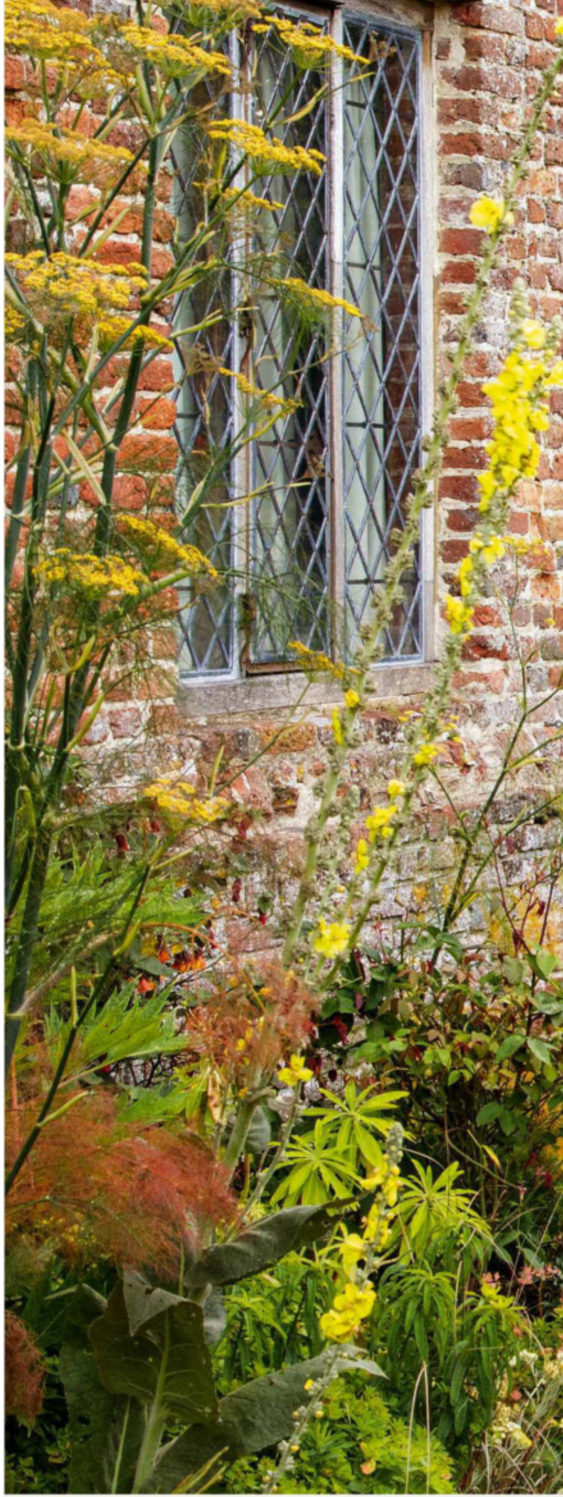
Address Sissinghurst Castle, Biddenden Road, nr Cranbrook, Kent TN17 2AB.
Tel 01580 710700. **Web** nationaltrust.org.uk/sissinghurst **Open** Gardens open daily 11am-5.30pm. Admission £17.
Follow Troy on Instagram @troyscottsmith1

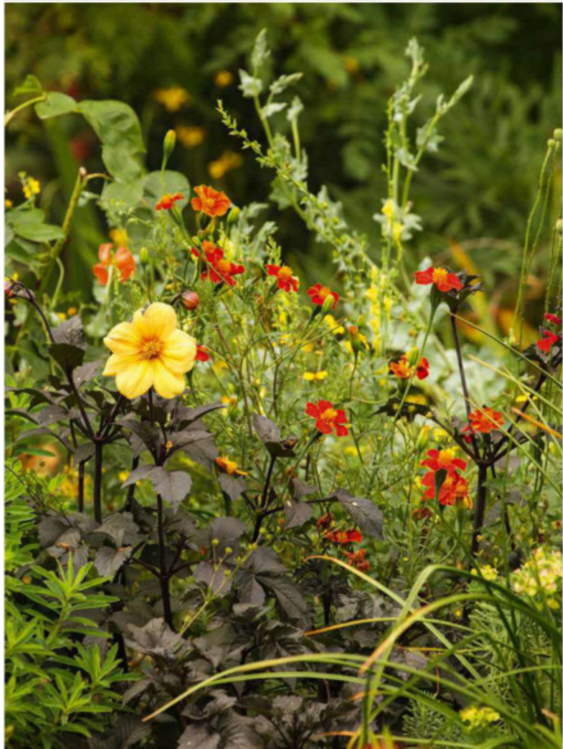
Main image
In high summer, the Cottage Garden brings together shades of red, orange and yellow to create a lively colour scheme. *Foeniculum vulgare* and a tall yellow verbascum add height to a mix of *Arctotis* 'Mahogany' and *A.* 'Flame', *Tagetes* 'Cinnabar', *Euphorbia palustris* and salvias.

Bottom row from left
The dark leaves of *Dahlia* 'Yellow Hammer' add to the jungle-like feel of the Cottage Garden, and show off the lemon-yellow flowers, here complemented by the burnt-orange flowers of *Tagetes* 'Cinnabar'.

Hemerocallis lilioasphodelus, *Euphorbia palustris, Oenothera stricta* 'Sulphurea' and the rusty tones of *Helianthus annuus* 'Earth Walker'. *Rosa* 'Dusky Maiden' is a floribunda rose with single, sultry, crimson flowers.

Contrasting shapes and colours are in abundance in high summer, with *Crocosmia* 'Lucifer' and an unnamed hybrid of *Verbascum* that sprung up spontaneously in the Cottage Garden. The rare foxglove *Digitalis ferruginea* 'Gigantea' has hundreds of tubular, bronze-orange flowers on straight, erect spikes.





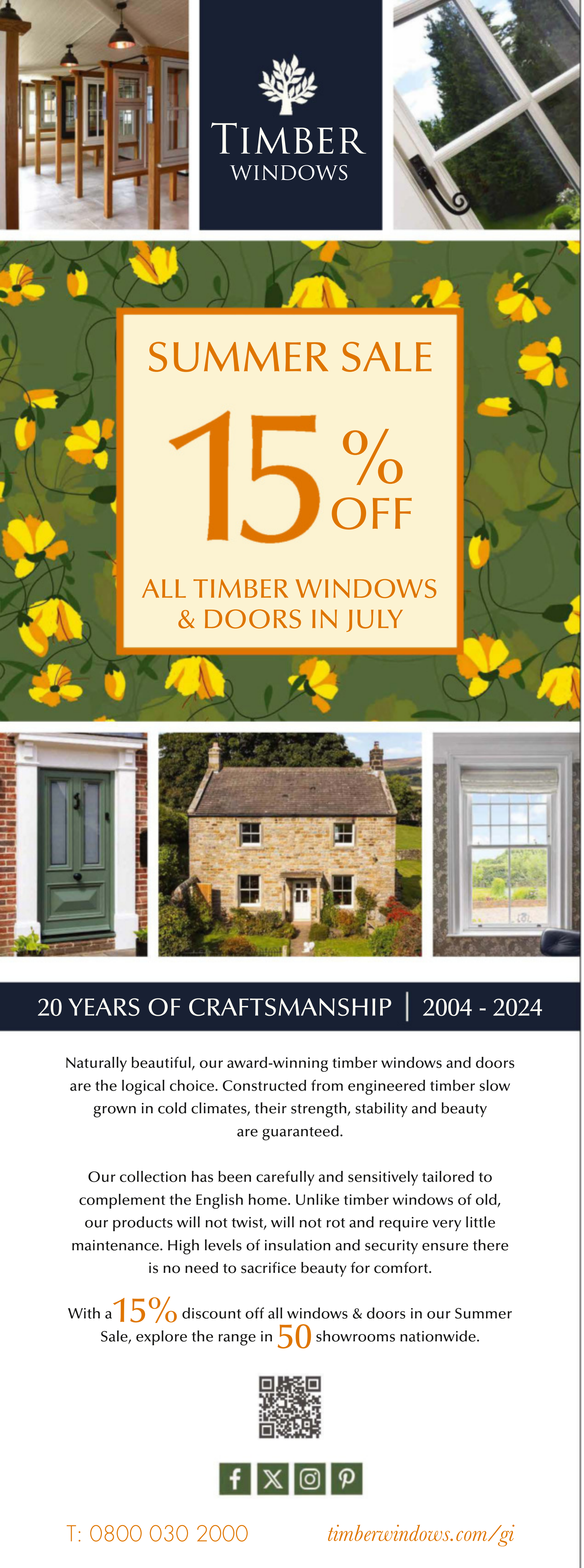
High summer focus: the Orchard

When Vita and Harold arrived at Sissinghurst they discovered an old orchard within the crumbling Elizabethan walls, which Harold later described as having ‘a perimeter path edged with musk roses and iris and in the middle winding paths with dells, boskies, tangles – in fact, everything but not garden flowers – wild roses, white foxgloves in droves, narcissus in regiments…’

Offering far-reaching views of the Kentish Weald, with mature oaks planted staccato along the bank of the medieval moat, it is a tranquil space, which in the height of summer thrums with an orchestra of crickets among the tall grass, but offers interest throughout the year. Vita filled it with her favourite daffodils, including ‘Beersheba’, ‘Medusa’, ‘Irene Copeland’ and the late-flowering ‘Brunswick’, and many of these still feature in the spring meadow. From mid-February, when fruit trees are heavy with the promise of spring blossom, it is awash with a haze of yellow, then in midsummer ancient gallica roses scramble through gnarled trees and the grass is studded with wildflowers.

In recent years we have returned to traditional meadow management, to create an environment in which wildflowers and wildlife can thrive. We have rediscovered the age-old craft of scything. This simple method of hay making, last used here 50 years ago, immediately links Sissinghurst back to its past, re-capturing the authenticity of Sissinghurst as a romantic garden in a rural setting.

The Orchard is a tranquil space, which in high summer thrums with an orchestra of crickets among the tall grass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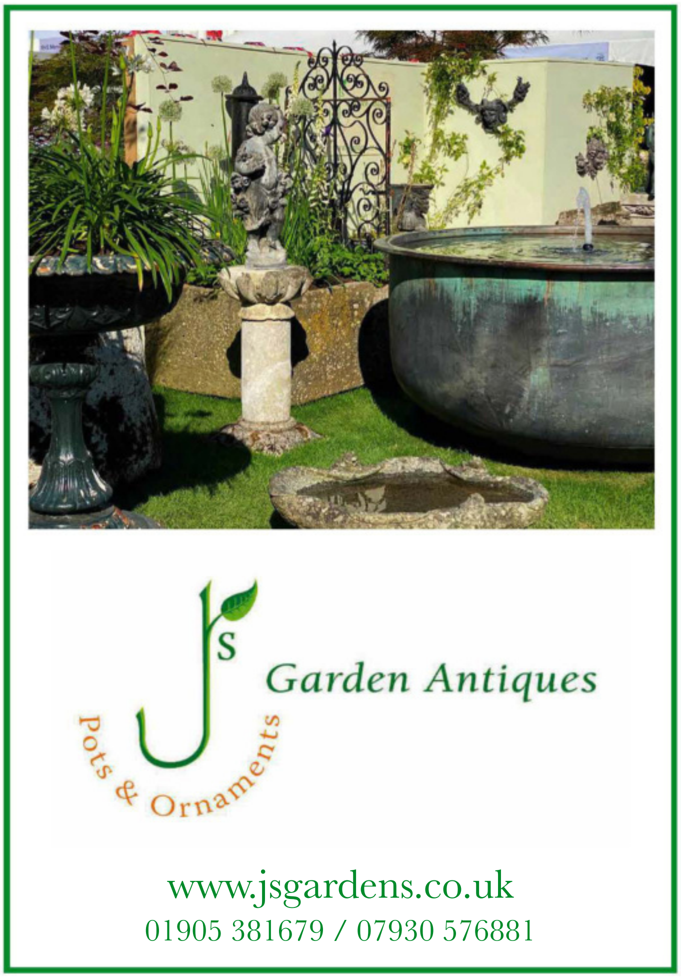
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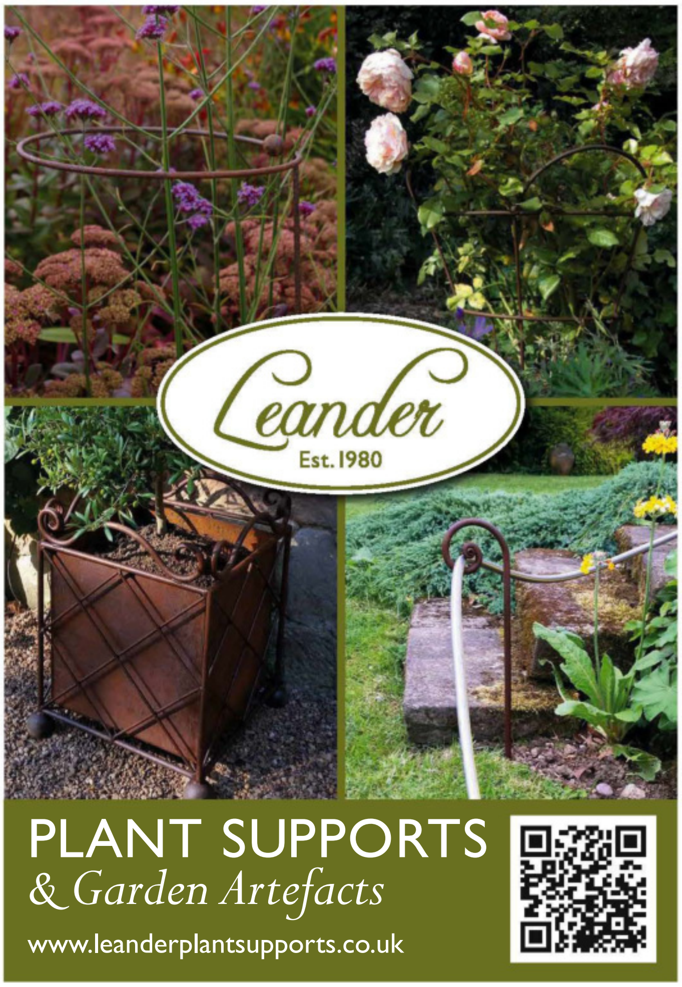
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DIVINE INSPIRATION

Not every idea in **Nigel Slater**'s garden has arrived fully formed – some are begged, borrowed and even stolen

ILLUSTRATION **PAUL WEARING** PORTRAIT **JENNY ZARINS**

Many people have had a hand in my garden, most without knowing it. They may not have turned the earth with a spade or clipped my hedges, or chosen a new plant, but they are as responsible for how the space looks, feels and smells as I am.

I like to think the choice of plants is mine and mine alone, but how did I come up with the idea of burnt-orange tulips gracing the verdigris-coated copper planter? It was lifted from Vita Sackville-West's Cottage Garden at Sissinghurst, just as the old pots of straggly pelargoniums were 'borrowed' from the sitting room of Jim Ede's house at Kettle's Yard in Cambridge. The dark-pink roses sitting in front of my terracotta-painted brick walls did not come from my own imagination, but were inspired by a sun-baked palazzo in Florence, and I'm pretty sure I know the book cover that is responsible for the positioning of a magenta rhododendron against the dark yew hedge.

While I often refer to 'my' garden, the truth is closer to 'their' garden, the term more accurately respecting the provenance of the ideas behind it. I often use the expression 'borrowed', but sometimes an idea is literally ripped off, like the flock of mauve hepaticas around a tree stump I spotted on Instagram. Within an hour of seeing the post, I'd ordered a range of pale- and dark-purple cultivars and moved an ancient tree stump into a suitable place under my robinia.

I've carried some 'inspiration' around in my head for years. Images from books, television and gardens I have visited have been squirrelled away in my head for decades, waiting to be unpacked. The notion of splitting my long, thin urban space into three rooms was a concept I picked up from elsewhere. I happily took the idea on board and now can't imagine the garden with any other layout.

Designers, books, television programmes and magazines have all played their part in creating this space. And so they ▷

This is very much a magpie's garden in that ideas have been picked up from all over the place. If something sparkled, I was on it

▷ should. Every book must earn its keep, and what is the point of watching inspirational television programmes if you don't take up some of the suggestions on offer? It would be hard to find a single bit of planting in this garden that I could truthfully say is mine and mine alone. The same can, of course, be said of recipes.

Some of this garden comes from plans formed long, long ago. The first plant I held in wonder was an apricot-coloured azalea from my parents' suburban garden. The delicate wings, long filaments and deep red anthers made me think, at eight years old, of an embroidered dragon, the sort you might find on a long satin robe. I have never had the right soil for such a plant to succeed, and yet here they are, in pots of ericaceous compost on my kitchen-roof garden.

Some people get a bit of credit for their input. Designer Dan Pearson brought many ideas to this space, including clouds of white brunneras and epimediums for underplanting; the snow-white *Cornus* 'Gloria Birkett' (known in this house simply as Gloria) and lacecap hydrangeas. They are plants I probably wouldn't have chosen myself, and I remain ever grateful for their introduction. Such things were rigorously planned, but other ideas have been more spontaneous. The *Magnolia yunnanensis* I bought on sight at a nursery on a whim. An admittedly bonkers idea, but it is now growing in a large pot in the front lightwell, where it is, somewhat surprisingly, thriving.

Occasionally, I have had no choice but to work with others' ideas. I wouldn't have planted a large robinia in a garden as diminutive as this, but someone did, and I just work around it. It has taken much trial and expensive error to work out what will survive under its canopy. Some other 'brilliant ideas' I have happily strangled at birth include the enormous bamboo a previous owner planted near a drain – what were they thinking? – and the hideous grey panelling that made the garden look like a NCP car park.

Books, especially the addictive coffee-table variety, and even films are particularly good sources for anyone planning a garden. The notion of incorporating high hedges came from Peter Greenaway's film *The Draughtsman's Contract*. The setting of Groombridge Place in Kent is home to magnificent hedges and topiary that stayed in mind for almost two decades before I had the opportunity to plant my own. This is very much a magpie's garden in that ideas have been picked up from all over the place. If something sparkled, I was on it.

That said, there is such a thing as too much inspiration. A visit to a garden show or even a trip to a nursery can sometimes result in an overload. I regularly come home bursting with new plans and often want to tear my garden to pieces and start again. These plans have usually dissolved, or at least been tempered to within the realms of possibility, within 24 hours. What I take away is more likely to be small details. Occasionally, a decision is made on the spot, without a plan. The notion of letting a climbing rose rampage over a tall yew hedge was unconsidered but I wouldn't dream of changing it. The wisteria climbing into the fig tree is something the wisteria decided to do with no help from me – a delight I could not have foreseen.

So what I have ended up with is a garden made up of ideas that have been begged, borrowed and yes, stolen. It is none for the worse for it – in fact it is all the richer for it. I am grateful to all. ☐

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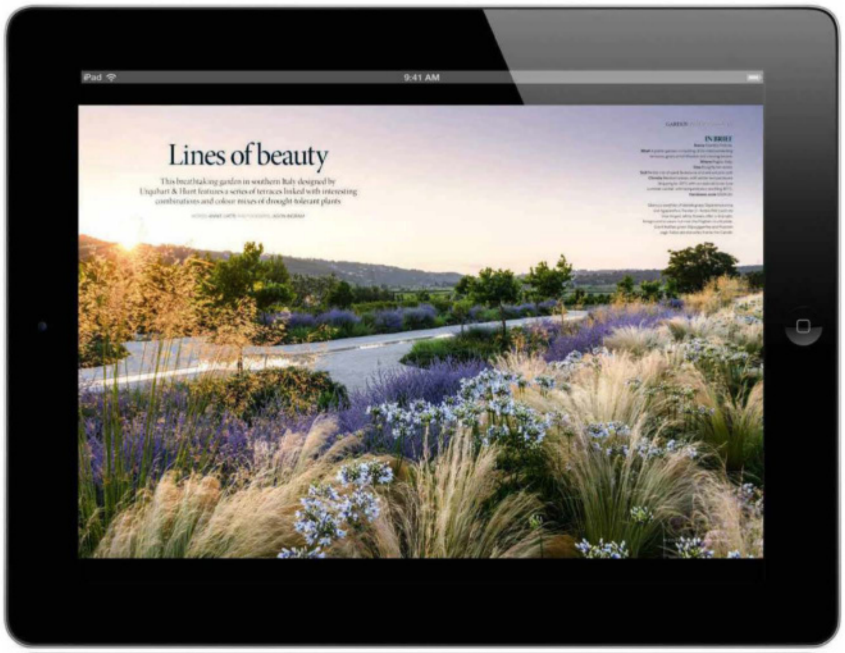

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Lines of beauty

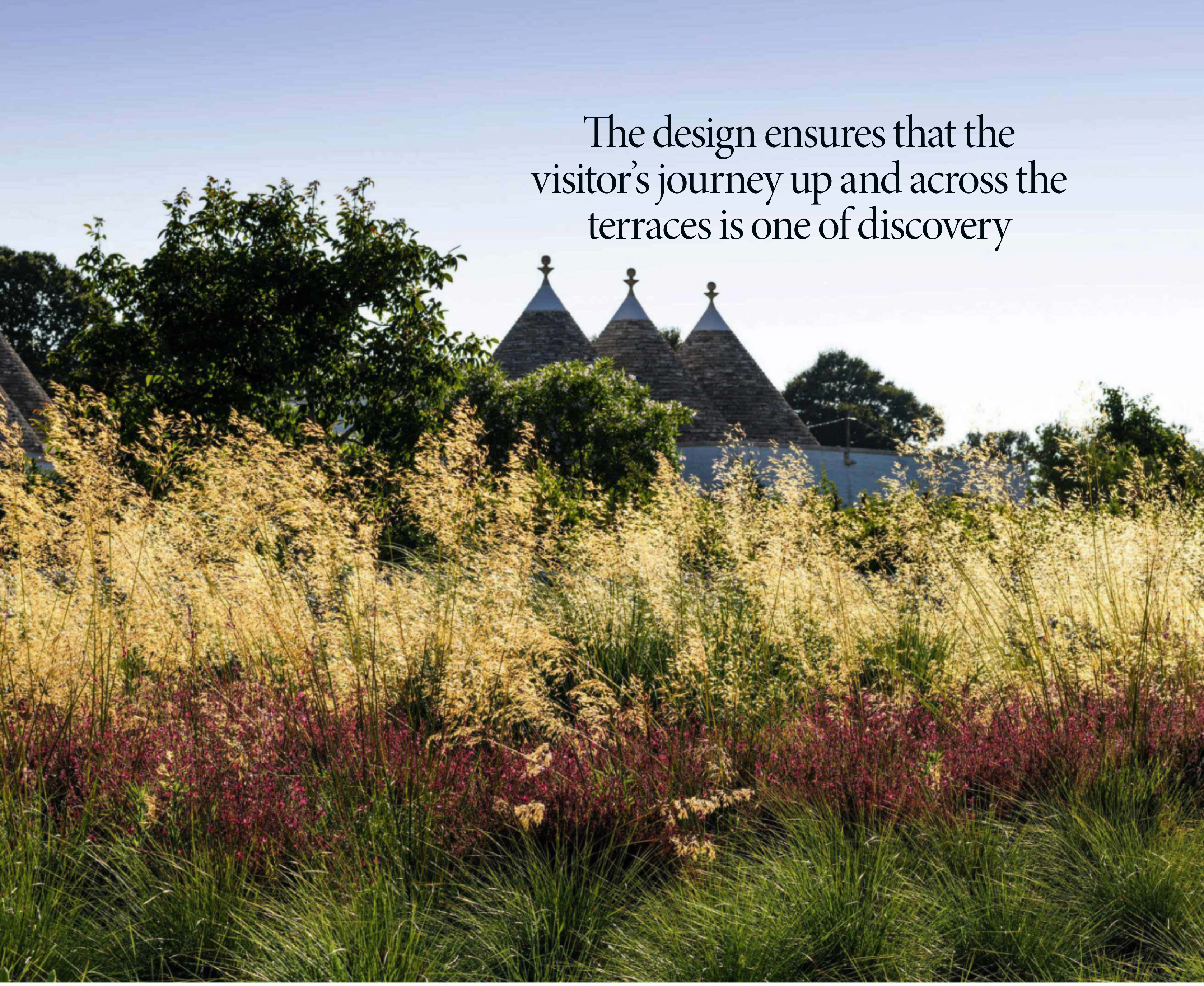
This breathtaking garden in southern Italy designed by Urquhart & Hunt features a series of terraces linked with interesting combinations and colour mixes of drought-tolerant plants

WORDS ANNIE GATTI PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM

IN BRIEF

Name Giardini Pistola.
What A public garden consisting of six interconnecting terraces, grass amphitheatre and viewing mount.
Where Puglia, Italy.
Size Roughly ten acres.
Soil Fertile mix of sand, limestone and red volcanic soil.
Climate Mediterranean, with winter temperatures dropping to -10°C with occasional snow. Low summer rainfall, with temperatures reaching 40°C.
Hardiness zone USDA 10.

Glorious swathes of blonde grass *Stipa tenuissima* and *Agapanthus* Twister (= 'Ambic001') with its blue-tinged, white flowers offer a dramatic foreground to views out over the Puglian countryside. Giant feather grass *Stipa gigantea* and Russian sage *Salvia abrotanoides* frame the Canale.



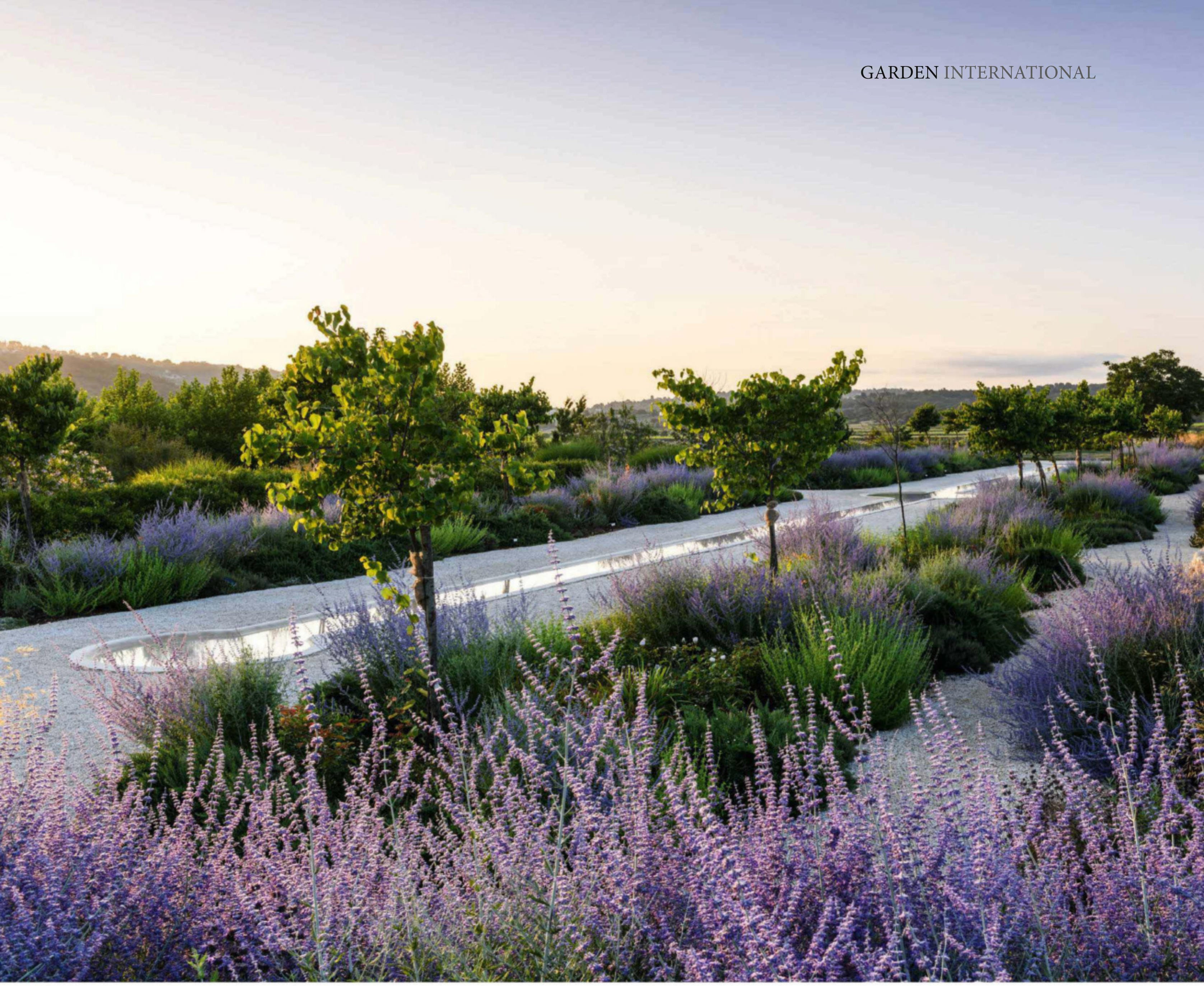
The design ensures that the visitor's journey up and across the terraces is one of discovery

Above Traditional trulli stone huts, skilfully renovated as holiday rentals, provide the backdrop to the top terrace. The borders offer a gentle screen between the private and public realm with taller plantings of *Stipa gigantea* and *Molinia caerulea* subsp. *arundinacea* 'Black Arrows' underplanted with deep reds and burgundy of *Oenothera lindheimeri* Gaudi Red (= 'Florgaured'), *Lobelia tupa*, *Thymus* Coccineus Group, *Teucrium marum* and *Origanum vulgare* 'Zorba Red'.

The approach to Giardini Pistola is along a winding drive, through vineyards, in the unspoilt valley of Canale di Pirro in the Puglia region of southern Italy, with a backdrop of gentle hills covered in downy oak woodlands, where wild boar roam free. These terraced gardens, designed by Urquhart & Hunt, were carved out of a sloping meadow four years ago, and are an exciting experiment in planting that combines Mediterranean and English garden styles.

Designers Lulu Urquhart and Adam Hunt – best known for winning Best in Show at RHS Chelsea in 2022 for the beaver-inspired A Rewilding Britain Landscape – were invited by owner Constant Tedder to create the garden below the restored farmhouse and connected trulli (Puglia's distinctive cone-shaped stone huts). The top section of the 8m slope had already been landscaped as three interconnecting terraces, while the rest was still an expanse of bare soil.

"There's a magic to the landscape here, a permanence, a history, with field after field of ancient olive trees, some over a thousand years old," explains Adam. "The owner wanted to create something absolutely beautiful that provided a series of different experiences across six terraces." It was intended to make it an open garden for the public to visit, and as well as a space for functions, the wishlist included



an amphitheatre, a child-friendly water feature, a maze, pergolas with edible and ornamental climbers, and elements of discovery. While Adam started to conceive the masterplan, the planting design team (Valerie Bond, Petra Ulrik and Lulu) researched possible plants for Pistola's challenging temperature range of between -10°C and 40°C, and its recent increases in springtime rainfall.

With feedback from local nurseries and inspiration from French nurseryman Olivier Filippi's drought-tolerant catalogue, they drew up a list of plants that should survive with no irrigation once established. "We found it hard to judge the exact hardiness when it comes to heat and frost, and no irrigation," says Lulu. "The hardiness charts often don't reveal that."

The greatest challenge, however, was using only plants that are not affected by or host to the *Xylella fastidiosa* pathogen that has already devastated olive plantations in parts of southern Italy. Banned plants include other star players of Italian gardens such as lavender and oleander. "This is where our passion for ecological balance and future-proofing gave precedence to our design," explains Lulu. "No plant we selected would be a host to *Xylella*."

Finally they drew up a very detailed planting plan and handed it over to the gardening team at Giardini Pistola. Covid restrictions at the time meant that the designers could not travel to oversee the planting, but with project manager ▷

Above A 64m-long rill, constructed from local limestone, forms the Canale, the formal heart of the garden. Mirror beds on either side ripple with plantings of mauve-flowered *Salvia abrotanoides*, creeping thyme *Thymus serpyllum* and yet-to-bloom *Calamintha nepeta*. The mastic trees (*Pistacia lentiscus*) are intended to create a sense of presence once they are mature.

Above left The organically shaped beds in the Trees and Beds Terrace create winding paths that invite visitors to immerse themselves in the layered planting that spills around key trees, such as x *Chitalpa tashkentensis* Summer Bells (= 'Minsum'), that link visually with the woodland in the hills beyond. Mounds of drought-tolerant perennials, including santolinas and *Pseudodictamnus*, combine with grasses that reach a crescendo of bleached tones in late summer.

Above right Two mild-steel pergolas, planted with a succession of climbers such as bottle gourds, kiwis and *Rosa banksiae* var. *banksiae* create verticality in the Tunnels Terrace and provide linear routes through the space. They are softened with *Rosa* Crystal Fairy (= 'Spekren'), *Rosa* The Fairy Tale Rose (= 'Poulcas065') and red-flowered *Glandularia peruviana*, which spill across the paths.

▷ Ollie Stroud and a skilled team of Italian landscapers on the ground, the results were beyond their expectations, and in June 2021, the garden opened to the public.

A wander up the garden from the bottom of the terraces reveals the fascinating mix of plants that made the final list. In the majority of the terraces, which are all 80m x 22m, the planting palette comprises between five and 13 species that are used in simple, repeated combinations to soften the linear nature of the garden. The design also ensures that the visitor's journey up and across the terraces is one of discovery. "We wanted people to meander and on occasions be surprised about where they came out; to take time to experience the landscape of this special place," explains Adam. Crushed limestone paths provide a network of different ways to navigate the terraces and the interlinking slopes. The same white stone, luminescent in the southern Italian light, has been used to pave the steps and build the walls.

The first level is conceived as a Play Terrace, with a maze of clipped Italian buckthorn (*Rhamnus alaternus* 'John Edwards') and an in-ground trampoline. Banks of planting are used to create the level changes between each terrace. "The bank plantings have their own identity," explains Lulu, "with reference plants from the planting choices of the terraces above and below." This helps to blend the transitions between the terraces and gives cohesion to the whole scheme. ▷

To continue turn to page 48

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and on occasions be surprised
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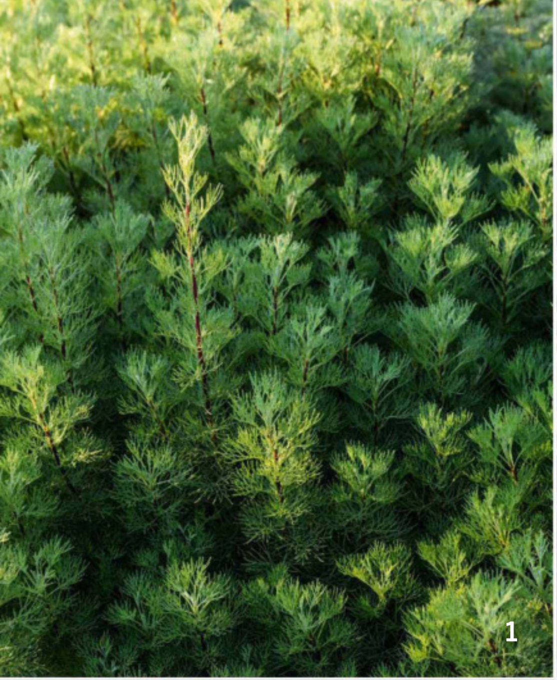
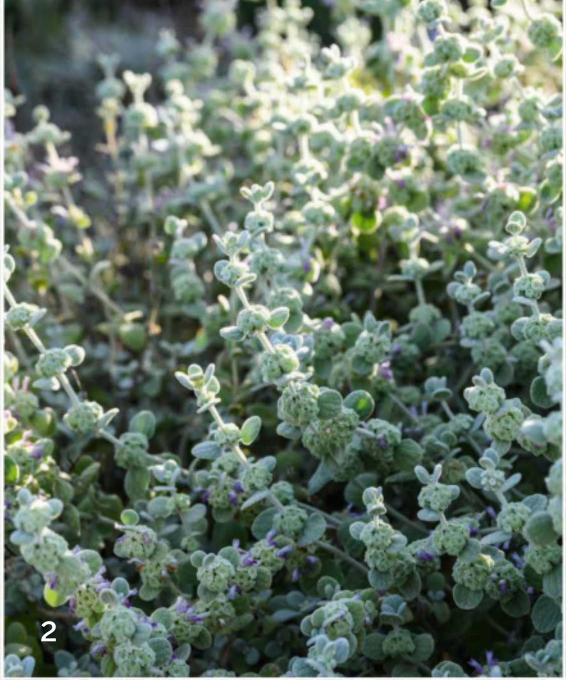
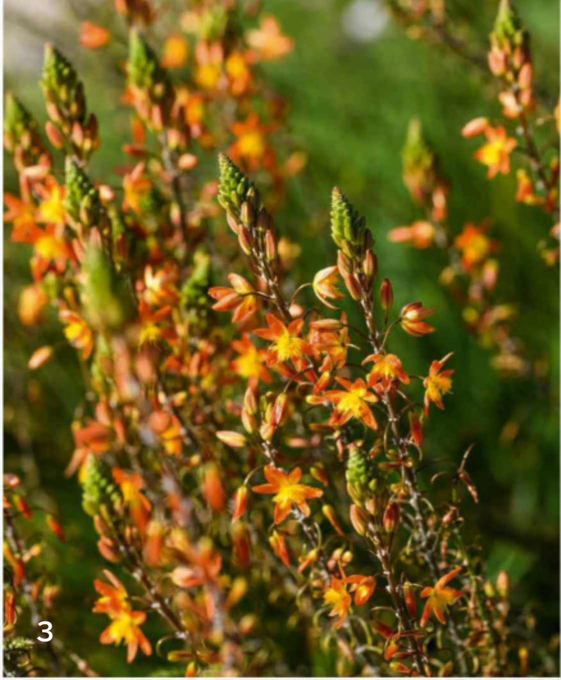
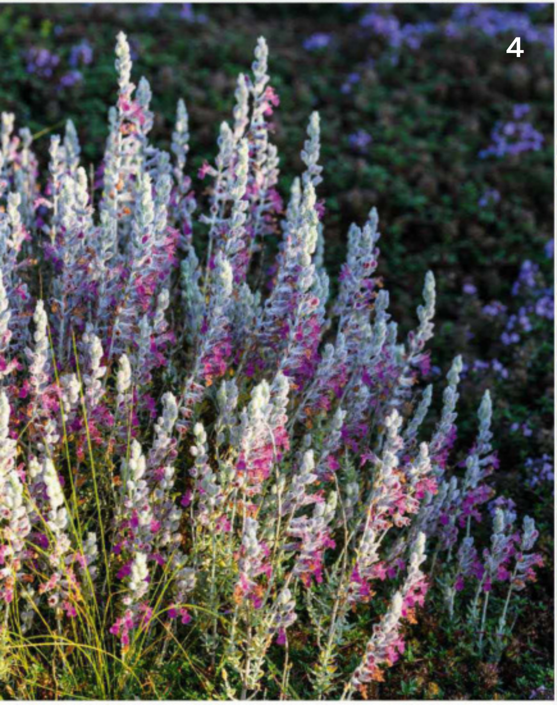
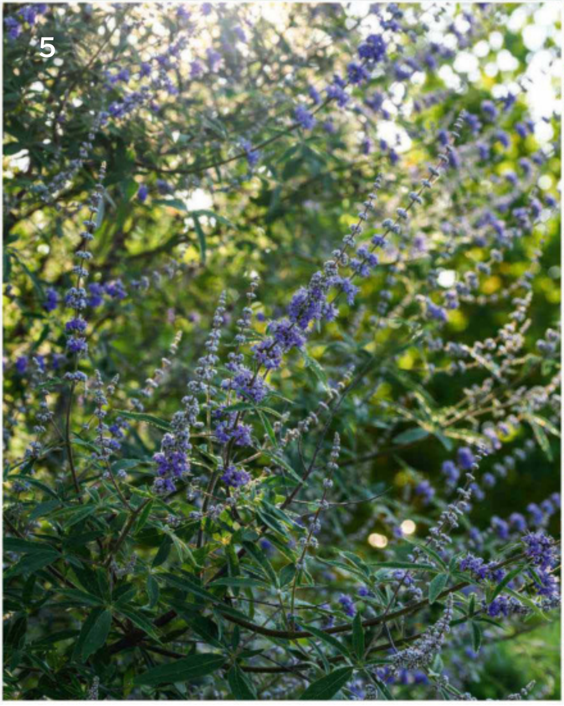
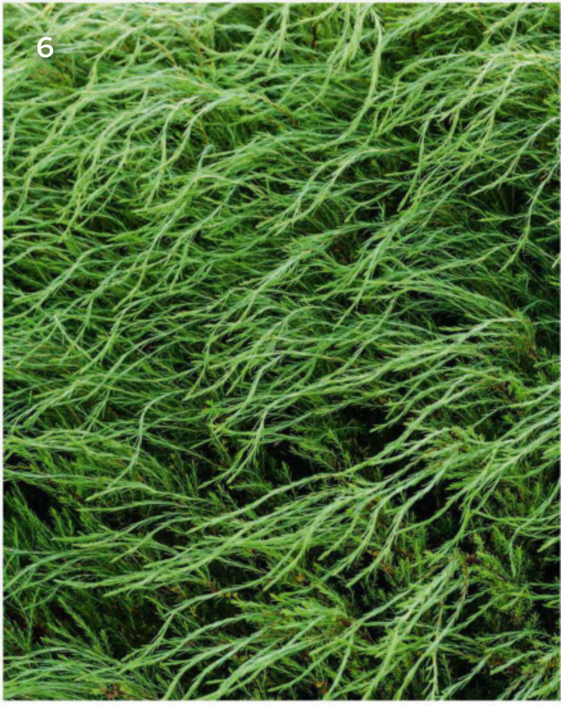












Urquhart & Hunt's top 12 dry garden plants

1 *Artemisia abrotanum* This Mediterranean native is a useful grey-green, textured vertical whose leaves burst with southernwood aromas, though it rarely produces its light-green flowers in the UK. Height and spread: 60cm x 60cm. RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b[†].

2 *Pseudodictamnus mediterraneus* A robust, drought-tolerant evergreen that forms pretty, woolly mounds. Tiny, pink-purple, tubular flowers emerge in summer along the stem. Prefers poor, well-drained soil in full sun. 70cm x 80cm. AGM*. RHS H4, USDA 8b-10a.

3 *Bulbine frutescens* This South African succulent, with its spikes of star-shaped flowers, is used to inject joyful tones of yellow across the garden alongside orange from the selection *Bulbine frutescens* 'Hallmark'. The clumps of narrow leaves provide excellent groundcover. In the UK, grow in well-drained, sandy loam in full sun and keep dry in winter. 50cm x 1.5m. RHS H3, USDA 9a-11.

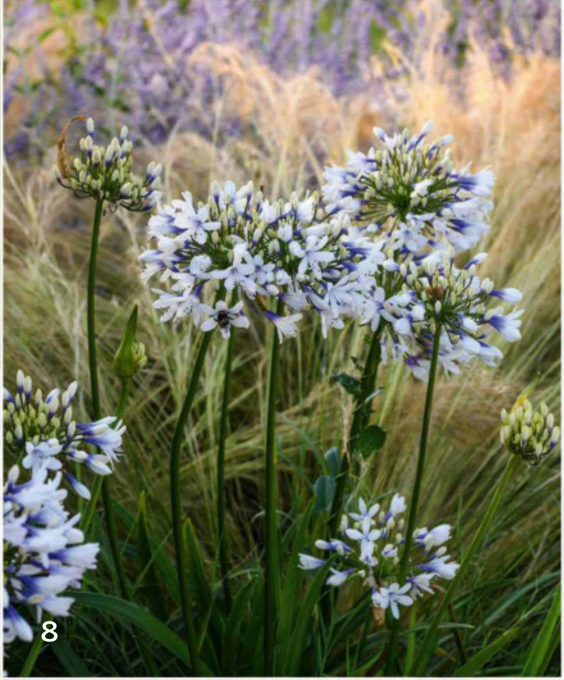
4 *Teucrium marum* A compact, wiry, evergreen subshrub, with grey-green aromatic leaves that have downy undersides. It is covered in tiny pink flowers on short spikes in late summer and autumn. Grow in full sun and cut back after flowering to maintain its shape. 40cm x 40cm. RHS H3.

5 *Vitex agnus-castus* This deciduous Mediterranean native has an open habit with aromatic, lance-shaped leaves and panicles of violet flowers in autumn. Grow against a warm wall in full sun, and in well-drained soil. 1.5m x 1.5m. RHS H4, USDA 6a-9b.

6 *Coleonema pulchellum* This South African evergreen shrub bears fresh-green, needle-like leaves and small, star-shaped, pink flowers with reflexed petals from late spring to summer. It has an upright shape and prefers full sun. 60cm x 60cm. RHS H3.

7 x *Chitalpa tashkentensis* Summer Bells (= 'Minsum') A hybrid of *Catalpa* and *Chilopsis*, this small deciduous tree has willow-like leaves and is covered with exotic, frilly pink flowers in summer. In the

7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UK, it is best planted in a sheltered spot in full sun on well-drained soil. 4-8m x 2.5-4m. RHS H4.

8 *Agapanthus* Twister (= 'Ambic001') This unusual form of African lily opens from white buds to produce clusters of white trumpets, tinged with dark-blue at the base. It stands well in summer heat, flowering throughout July and August in the UK, where it needs protection from winter frost. 60cm x 40cm. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 8a-10b.

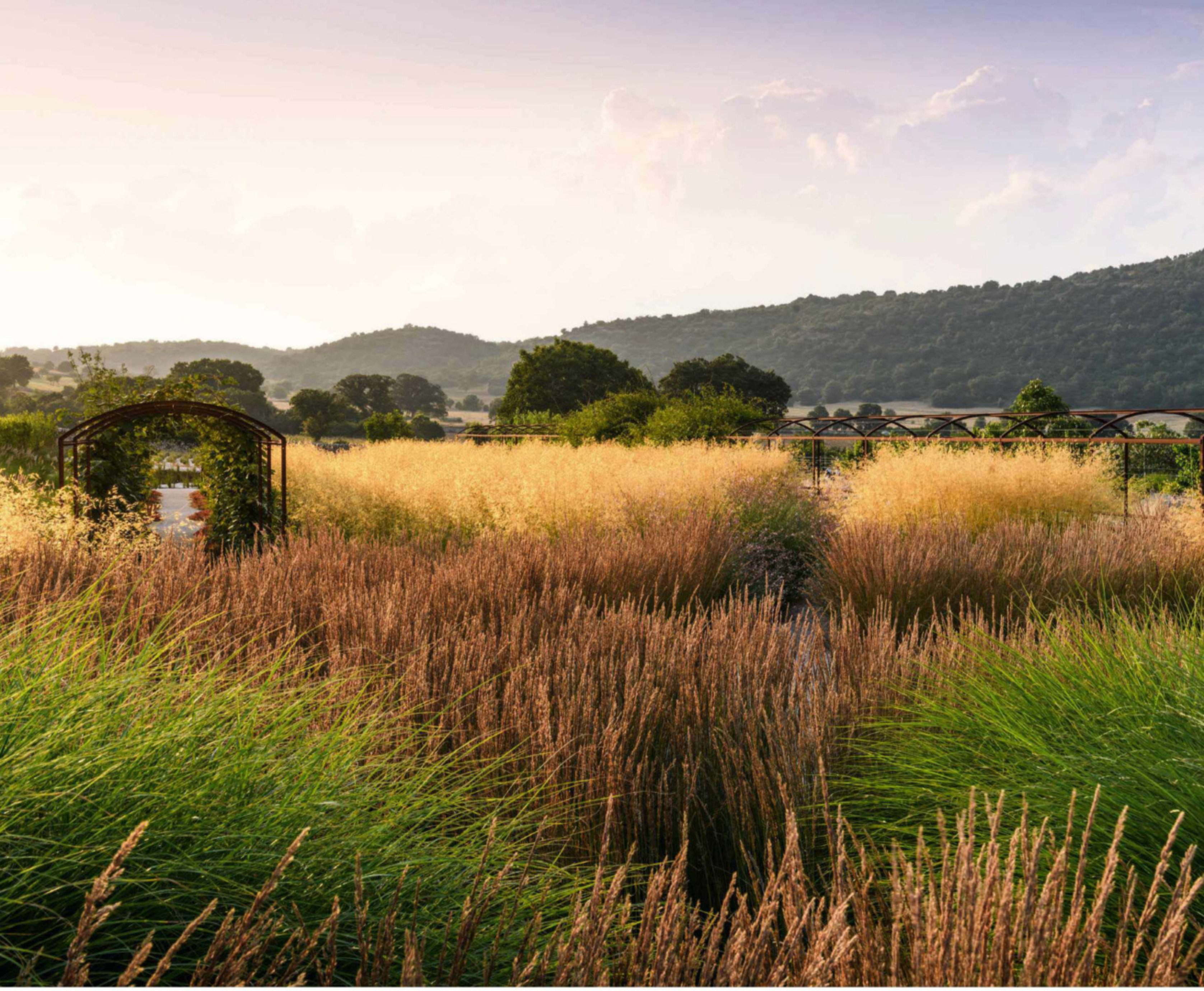
9 *Phyla nodiflora* This pretty, mat-forming perennial, covered in purple-centred flowers with white petals through spring and summer, makes excellent groundcover. A density of three plants per square metre at Pistola creates a lush, drought-tolerant lawn replacement. 15cm x 20cm. RHS H4.

10 *Cistus ladanifer* This aromatic, evergreen gum cistus has distinctive maroon blotches at the base of the white petals and bright-yellow stamens. It grows well in poor, well-drained soil, in a sheltered site in full sun. 1-1.5m x 1.5m. RHS H5.

11 *Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Hameln' This fountain grass forms a compact mound of narrow leaves and long-lasting sprays of fuzzy, pinkish flowers that fade to buff. It is planted en masse across the bank leading from the Tunnels Terrace to the open space for functions at Pistola. It is underplanted with species bulbs of *Iris* 'Harmony', *Iris* 'Alida' and *Tulipa humilis* var. *pulchella* Albocaerulea Oculata Group for spring interest. 60cm x 60cm. AGM. RHS H3, USDA 5a-9b.

12 *Santolina pinnata* subsp. *neapolitana* 'Sulphurea' Pale-yellow, button flowerheads cover this evergreen dwarf shrub from midsummer onwards. More compact than its cousins, it shows less tendency of flopping over from the weight of the blossoms. Its silver foliage plays well in a border of silvery-blue hues. 75cm x 75cm. AGM. RHS H5.

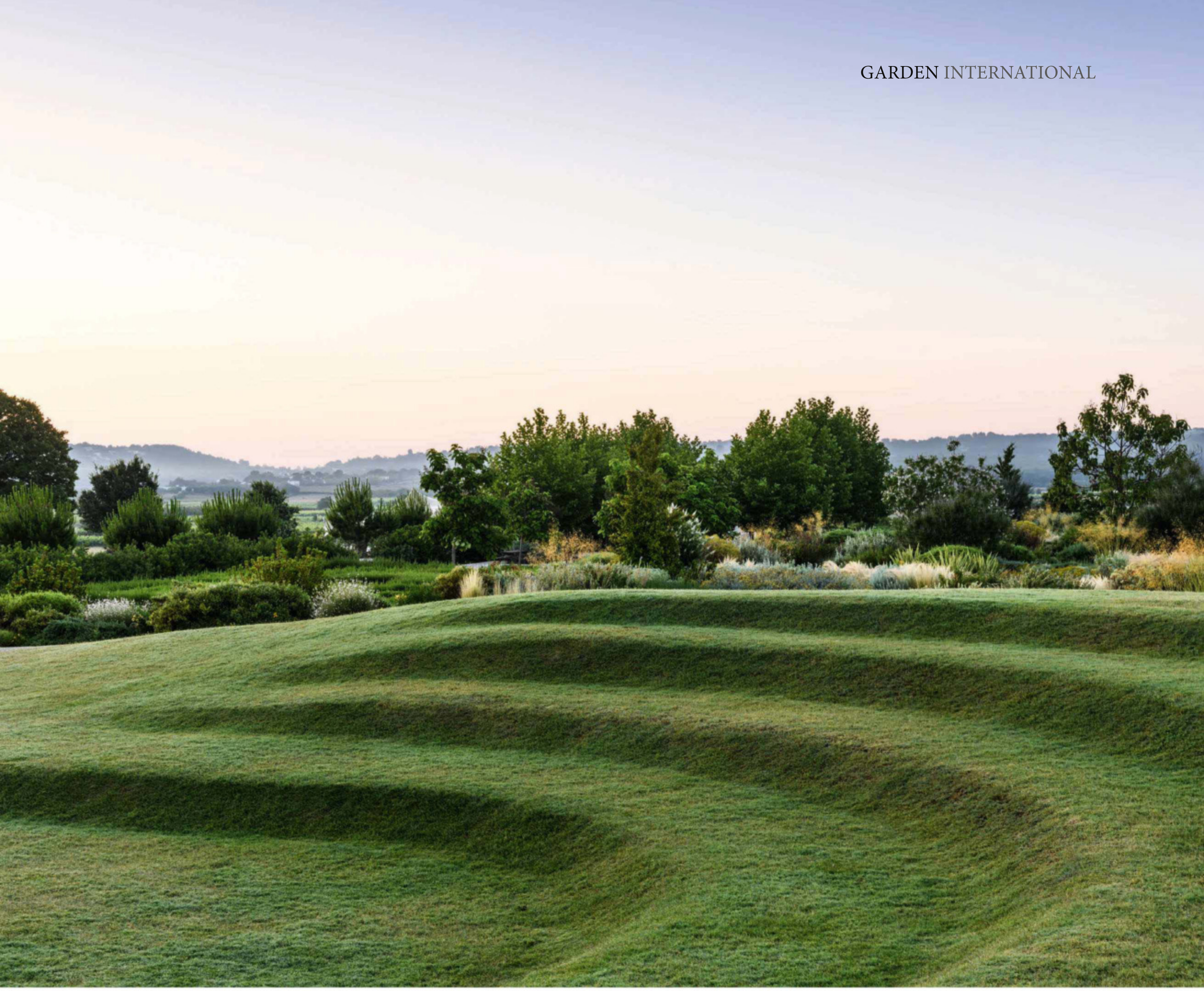
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
[†]Hardiness ratings given where available.



Above The Grasses Terrace features this matrix of three grasses: the biscuit-toned *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster', providing a vertical accent; the fine, textured, green foliage of *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Gracillimus'; and the buff haze of statuesque giant feather grass *Stipa gigantea*.

▷ The bank between the Play Terrace and the Trees and BedsTerrace above it, for example, combines white-flowered Mediterranean gum cistus (*Cistus ladanifer*) with white gaura *Oenothera lindheimeri* and statuesque *Leonotis leonurus* with its zingy orange blooms, with the cistus repeated in a simpler planting with *Erigeron karvinskianus* in the next terrace up. This level, which features a series of organically shaped beds, is a celebration of form and texture. Exotic-looking trees such as x *Chitalpa tashkentensis* Summer Bells (= 'Minsum') and foxglove tree (*Paulownia tomentosa)* emerge from mounds of grey-green and silver-foliaged plants, such as *Artemisia abrotanum*, *Pseudodictamnus hirsutus* and *Santolina pinnata* subsp. *neapolitana* 'Sulphurea', many sourced from Olivier Filippi's nursery.

Next, the winding paths give way to the formality of the Canale. On this terrace, an elegant central rill made from local Rici limestone is shallow enough for children to play in safely. Set along an east/west axis, the water provides stunning reflections from the sky. The lines of mastic trees (*Pistacia lentiscus*) in the linear borders either side are underplanted with a romantic mix of English roses in peachy shades, alongside whites, blues and purples from pale *Agapanthus* 'Nana Blue', Russian sage, *Geranium* x *cantabrigiense* 'Biokovo' and *G. sanguineum* 'Album'. Plumes of golden grass *Stipa gigantea* in the bank leading up to the next terrace anticipate this plant's dominant



role on the upper terraces where, as summer progresses, it arches ever higher, providing playful vertical accents.

The Tunnels Terrace features a pair of mild steel pergolas that support various climbers, including roses and edibles such as bottle gourds and kiwis. In contrast to the straight paths through the pergolas, the routes through the central beds wind and turn, providing a jungle-like experience, especially in late summer when the matrix of grasses rises to a crescendo of green, gold and bronze. Above this lies an open space shaded by plane trees, where large-scale events are held, and at the top of the garden, planting in the Grasses Terrace provides a bold screen in shades of red and gold between the public garden and the holiday accommodation above. On the west side of the terraced garden is the grass amphitheatre planted with drought-tolerant *Cynodon dactylon*, while on the east side a romantic mount offers an elevated view across the whole garden, revealing myriad pathways that ensure that visitors can explore every corner of this exuberant garden. □

USEFUL INFORMATION
Address Giardini Pistola, Strada Provinciale 1, Canale di Pirro, 72015 Fasano, BR Italy. **Tel** +39 (0)327 109 2505. **Web** giardinipistola.com For more information about Urquhart & Hunt's work, go to **urquharthunt.com**

Above The grass amphitheatre, used for events including star-gazing, is planted with Bermuda grass (*Cynodon dactylon*). Known as gramigna in Italy, this is a perennial grass with underground rhizomes that enable it to survive drought conditions. The banks echo the shape of the gentle hillscapes that frame this beautiful valley bowl.

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ANDY JACKSON

As a landscape architect who spent a year working with Keith Wiley at Wildside, Andy's passion lies in bringing naturalistic planting to the urban environment

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

> I remember my teacher holding up my dead pansy in front of the class. I like to think of it as the beginning of my interest in drought-tolerant plants

Earliest garden memory In primary school, each child in my class was tasked with looking after a pansy in a 7cm pot. I didn't water my plant at all and I remember my teacher holding up my dead pansy in front of the class. I like to think of it as the beginning of my interest in drought-tolerant plants.

First plant love Ferns were the first group of plants I really got interested in. I spent a lot of time visiting gardens trying to identify as many as possible. I like the way you have to spend time looking closely to really appreciate their nuances. I still think ferns are underrated in the garden.

Who has inspired your career? Working with plants and landscapes always seemed like an option for me as my mum, Caroline Jackson, is a horticulturist. I get a lot of inspiration from her. I was also lucky enough to spend a year working at Wildside in Devon with Keith Wiley. The work Keith is doing there is really special and his perspective on plants and landscapes is something that has really inspired me.

Horticultural heroes All those who are looking closely at natural landscapes to inform their work, particularly Peter Korn, Keith Wiley, James Hitchmough and Nigel Dunnett.

Favourite landscape I visited South Africa's Western Cape on an RHS bursary in 2022. The diversity of the plant communities around Namaqualand is unlike anything else I've seen. It's a real paradise for those interested in semi-arid plants. The spring bloom brings whole landscapes covered in flowers, which is an unforgettable experience.

Most valuable training My two-year garden traineeship at York Gate in Leeds was very formative. All of the team there are very passionate and their enthusiasm definitely ignited my passion for plants. I still think the work they do in the garden is really exciting and it's a brilliant environment to learn more about your plants.

Dream plant destination I've always wanted to visit the Himalayas. I'd love to see the alpine meadows and the rhododendrons in western China.

Favourite planting style Naturalistic planting with intricacy.

Favourite 'weed' *Corydalis lutea*. It's a great plant for softening hard edges.

Where do you see horticulture heading? I think we're starting to see a shift towards more environmentally minded gardeners. Even in the short time I've been gardening, it seems like conversations about how a garden can be used as a wildlife resource are much more commonplace than when I started out. I hope to see people becoming more interested in chaos and disorder, rather than straight lines and mowers.

Favourite gardening books Field identification guides from different places around the world.

Instagram @andy_jackson98

PHLOX

With highly fragrant blooms, this stalwart of the English flower garden brings some cool, fresh colour to late summer borders

WORDS **MATTHEW REESE** PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM**

FACT FILE

What A genus of around 60 species, made up mostly of alpine and meadow perennials. There are a few annual species, but this feature focuses on the perennial border phlox *Phlox paniculata* and its hybrids.

Season Summer into early autumn.

Size Around 1-2m high with a spread of around 50cm.

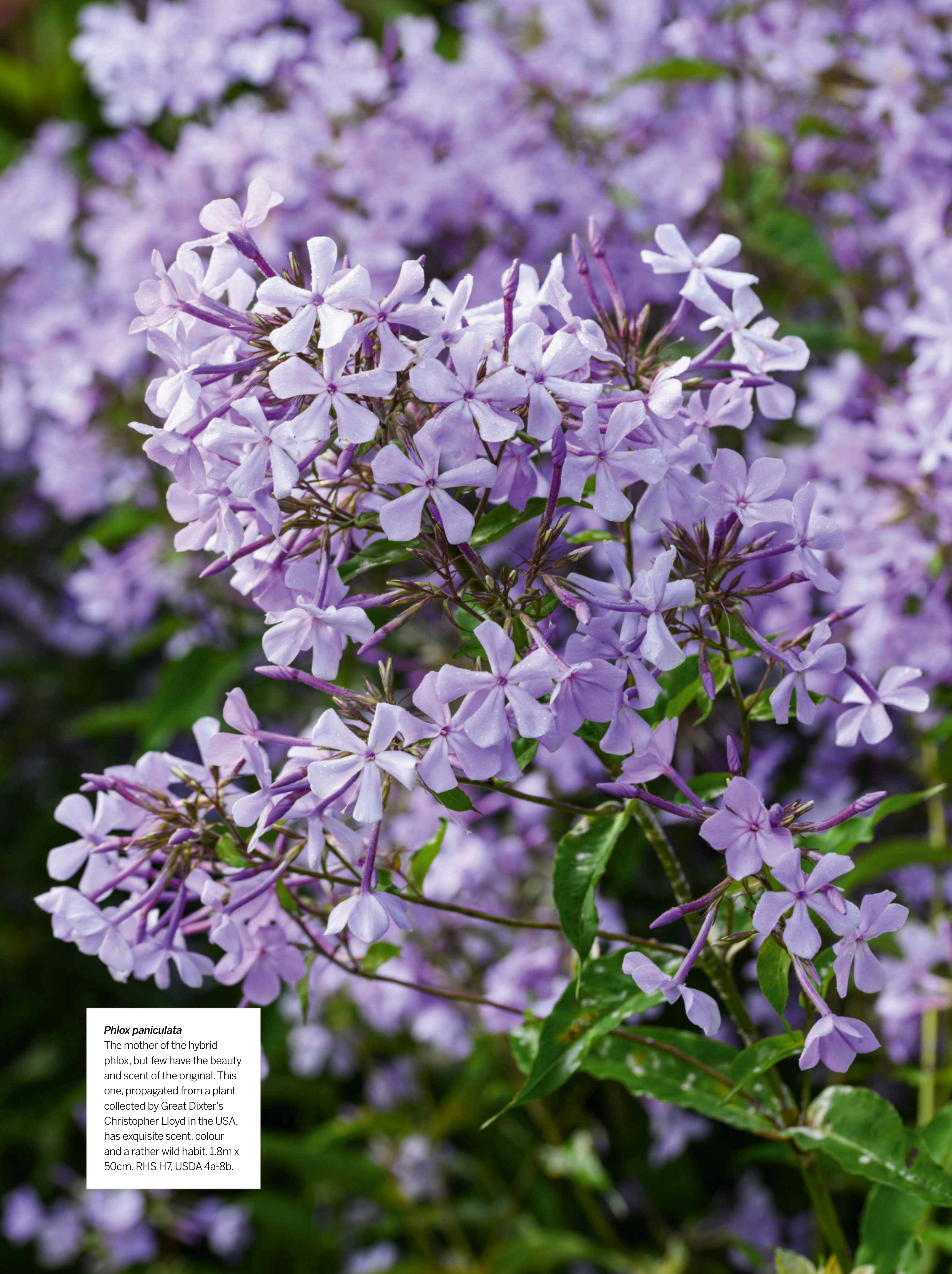
Conditions Moist, fertile, acidic soils, but will tolerate other soil conditions if adequate moisture and compost are provided during the growing season.

Origins North America.

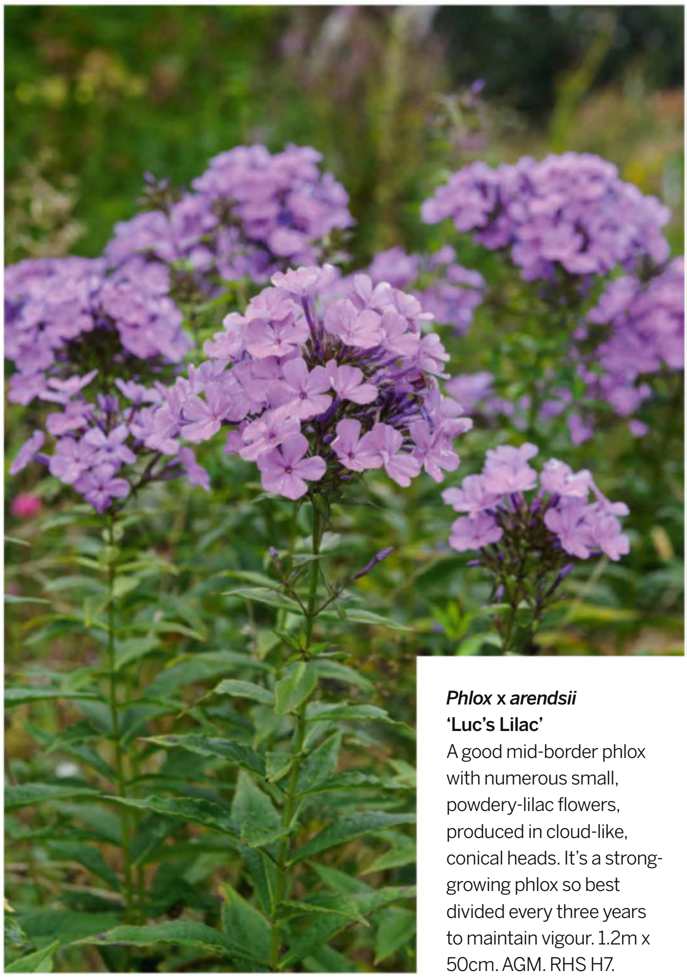
Hardiness Hardy throughout the UK, with an RHS rating of H7, and suitable for gardens in USDA zones 4a to 8b.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.

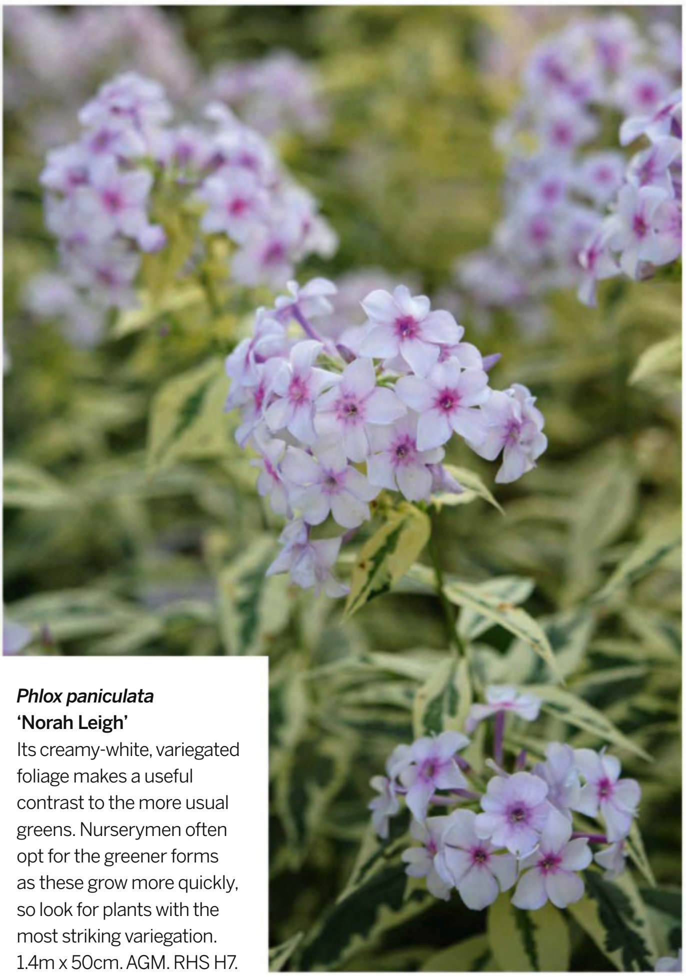
***Phlox paniculata* 'Rosa Pastell'**
An excellent cultivar with pink flowers, each with a pale-rose eye. These are held in trusses on strong stems and are particularly early. If it's growing well, deadheading will prompt a second flush later in the summer. Height and spread: 1m x 50cm. AGM*. RHS H7†.



Phlox paniculata
The mother of the hybrid phlox, but few have the beauty and scent of the original. This one, propagated from a plant collected by Great Dixter's Christopher Lloyd in the USA, has exquisite scent, colour and a rather wild habit. 1.8m x 50cm. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.



Phlox* x *arendsii
'Luc's Lilac'
A good mid-border phlox with numerous small, powdery-lilac flowers, produced in cloud-like, conical heads. It's a strong-growing phlox so best divided every three years to maintain vigour. 1.2m x 50cm. AGM. RHS H7.



Phlox paniculata
'Norah Leigh'
Its creamy-white, variegated foliage makes a useful contrast to the more usual greens. Nurserymen often opt for the greener forms as these grow more quickly, so look for plants with the most striking variegation. 1.4m x 50cm. AGM. RHS H7.

A summer flower garden would seem incomplete without border phlox, such is the character and beauty of the flowers. At a time when much of the garden is on the ebb, and could easily be dominated by shades of mustard-yellow, phlox provides cool pools of fresh colour to lift the spirit and provide a feast for insects.

When I worked at Great Dixter, the *Phlox paniculata* on the Long Border had a special appeal on warm August evenings. Christopher Lloyd had accumulated a large collection that he would use in large, billowing swathes throughout the garden to great effect. It would throw its rich, summery scent across the garden, and at twilight the mauve-purple flowers would transform into a new luminous mauve shade that seemed to hover above the dark canvas of foliage.

At Malverleys Garden in Hampshire, where I work now, we also use phlox extensively to provide late colour in the borders. We grow old favourites and some of the newer cultivars, but mainly we look for the taller, elegant varieties that are nearer to the species. These look more comfortable in the garden and are more likely to be disease-resistant.

There are around 60 species of phlox, including annuals, such as *P. drummondii*, and the widely grown alpine *P. subulata*, but here we are chiefly concerned with the taller-growing, summer- and autumn-flowering border phlox, *P. paniculata,* and its siblings. Through selection, crossing and hybridisation with allied species (including *P. maculata* and *P. divaricata*) back and forth over decades, we now have a group that is better represented in nursery catalogues than all other phlox types combined.

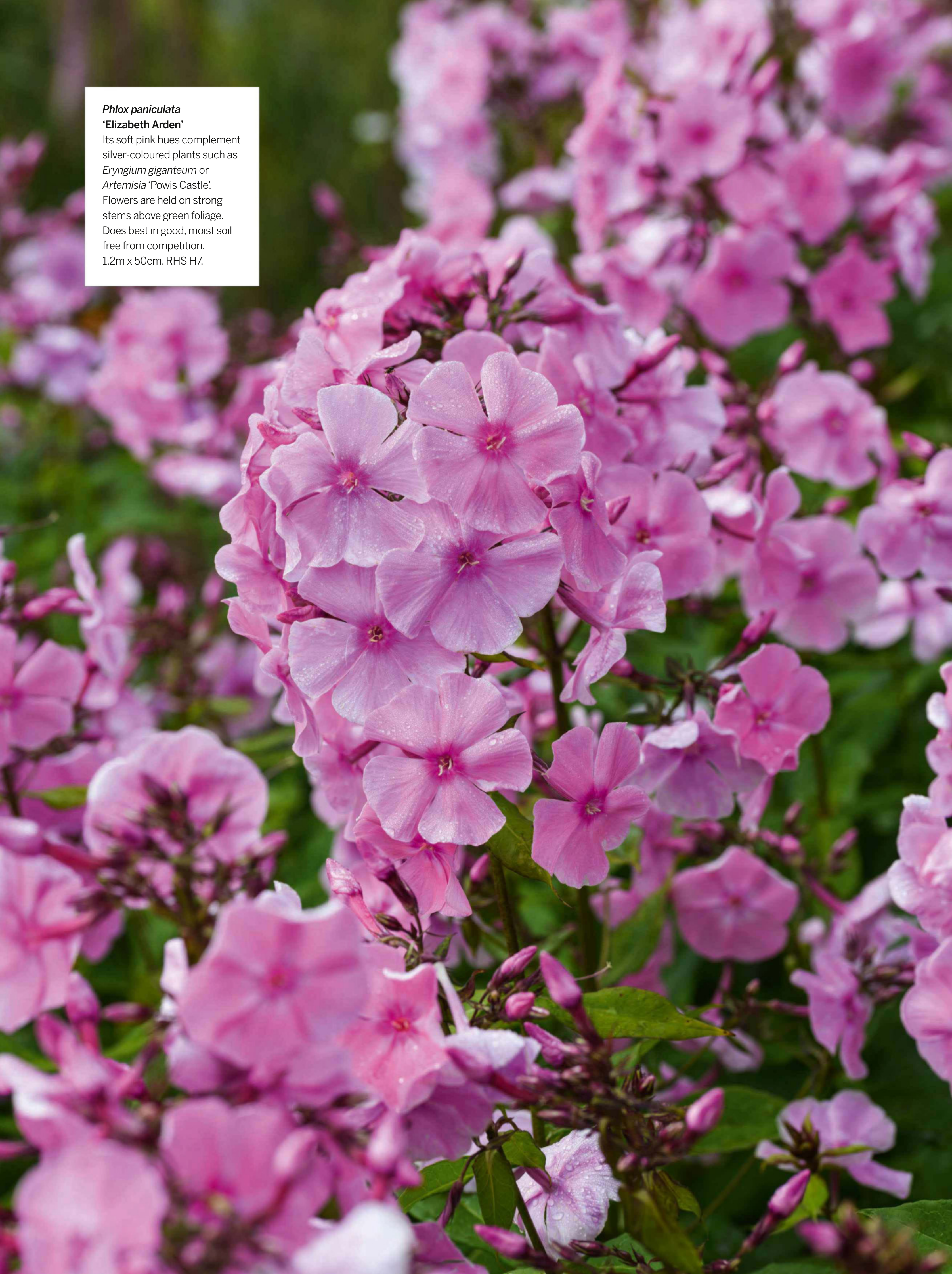
At a time when much of the garden is on the ebb, phlox provide cool pools of fresh colour to lift the spirit

Colours vary from pure whites to pinks, mauves and purples to magenta. There are also a few clones, such as *P. paniculata* 'Starfire', that are approaching red, and many with two-toned flowers, such as the well-known *P. paniculata* 'Bright Eyes'. There are taller cultivars, including *P.* x *arendsii* 'Utopia' that can reach 2m in height, and many shorter ones, such as *P. paniculata* 'Burgi' at 1m.

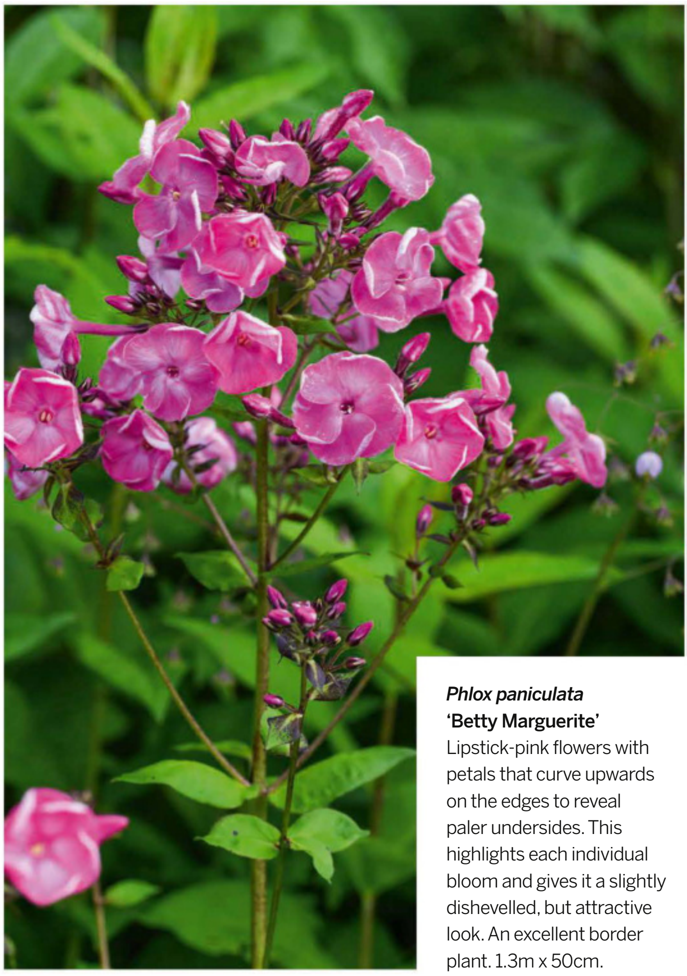
Flower formation is also variable. Some, like the small-flowered *P. paniculata* 'Betty Margarite', hold their flowers in quite tight, neat, pyramidal inflorescences, and others, such as 'Utopia', have large blooms in looser, lax domes. The seasonal range within the species stretches from July into October with *P. paniculata* 'Flamingo' flowering in early July, and the (nearly identical) *P. paniculata* 'Herbstwalzer' blooming much later, in September to October.

Phlox thrive in good, well-nourished soil that does not dry out too much during summer. Water is critical, but plants are less fussy about light – both full sun and part shade will do. They are best planted in groups where the conical flowerheads will make strong, undulating swathes of colour through the border. Planting in groups will add structure and stability to the planting, which is much needed in ▷

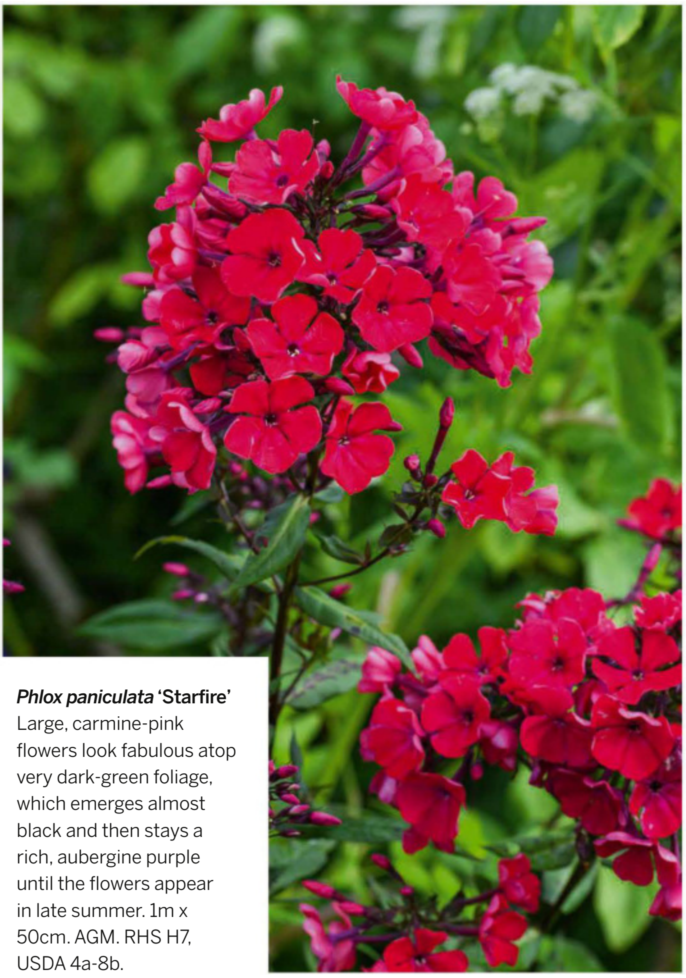
To continue turn to page 59



Phlox paniculata**
'Elizabeth Arden'**
Its soft pink hues complement silver-coloured plants such as *Eryngium giganteum* or *Artemisia* 'Powis Castle'. Flowers are held on strong stems above green foliage. Does best in good, moist soil free from competition. 1.2m x 50cm. RHS H7.



***Phlox paniculata* 'Betty Marguerite'**
Lipstick-pink flowers with petals that curve upwards on the edges to reveal paler undersides. This highlights each individual bloom and gives it a slightly dishevelled, but attractive look. An excellent border plant. 1.3m x 50cm.



***Phlox paniculata* 'Starfire'**
Large, carmine-pink flowers look fabulous atop very dark-green foliage, which emerges almost black and then stays a rich, aubergine purple until the flowers appear in late summer. 1m x 50cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

How to grow *Phlox*

• ***Phlox* require rich, fertile soil and moisture** during the growing season. If you're trying to grow phlox in difficult, drought-prone soils, take extra care to enrich the ground with a good supply of compost during winter and follow up with thorough watering during summer and autumn. Plant in full sun or part shade.

• **Taller cultivars will need staking** to prevent them from falling over. The best time to do this is a few weeks before they come into flower, with a strong cane and a ring of twine that incorporates the outer stems.

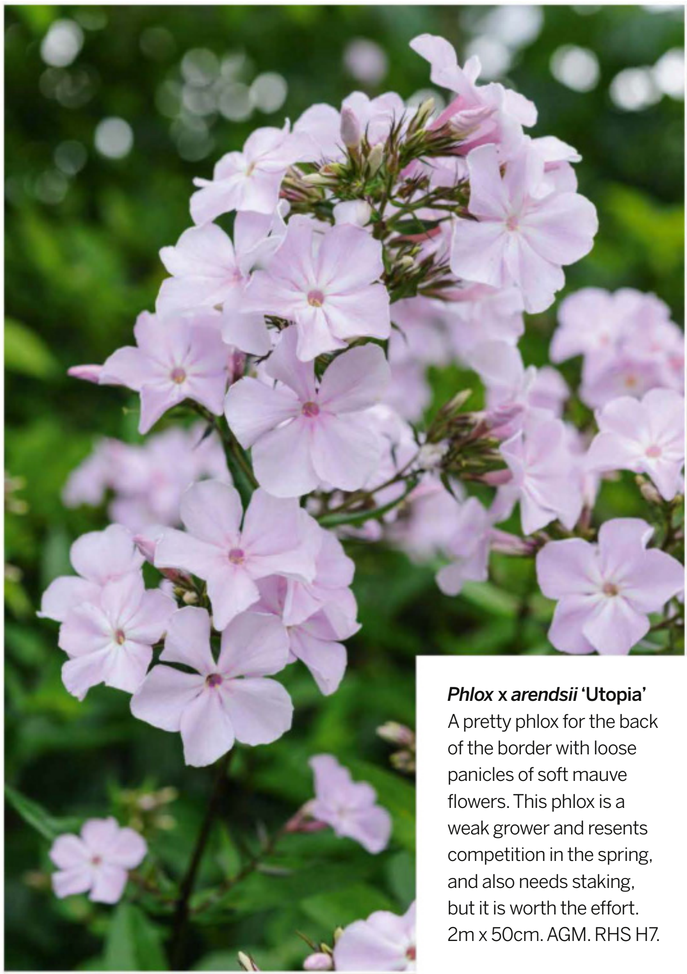
• **Deadhead earlier-flowering cultivars** such as *P. paniculata* 'Rosa Pastell' to prompt a second flush of flowers. Later-flowering cultivars, however, are unlikely to produce another round of blossom. Plants should be left up for autumn, until the stems are spent and dehydrated, before cutting back. At this point, they can be cleanly snapped off by using your feet to push them over.

• **To keep them flowering well, *Phlox* should be divided** every three to four years, ideally in winter, before February, when they come into growth. Split the plants into decent chunks – about the size of a saucer – which will be substantial enough to give a good display in the first year. Plant into soil invigorated with a good dose of compost and mark their location. In spring, protect emerging shoots from competition from early bulbs and annuals, and water during dry spells.

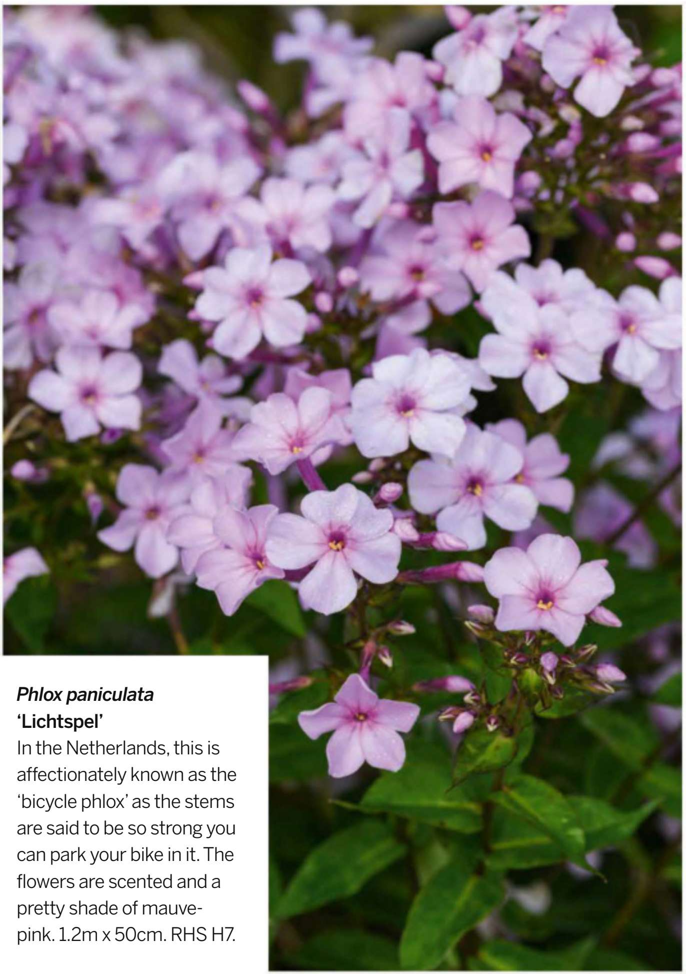
• ***Phlox* can also be propagated by stem cuttings,** but there is a risk of transferring stem eelworm (see right). The plants also propagate readily from root cuttings and as the eelworm do not invade the roots, this may be the safest course of action.

• **Powdery mildew can be problematic in periods of extended drought.** One or two protective sprays with a fungicide, such as Westland Fungus Guard, from mid-July to August is usually sufficient to protect our plants for the remainder of the growing season.

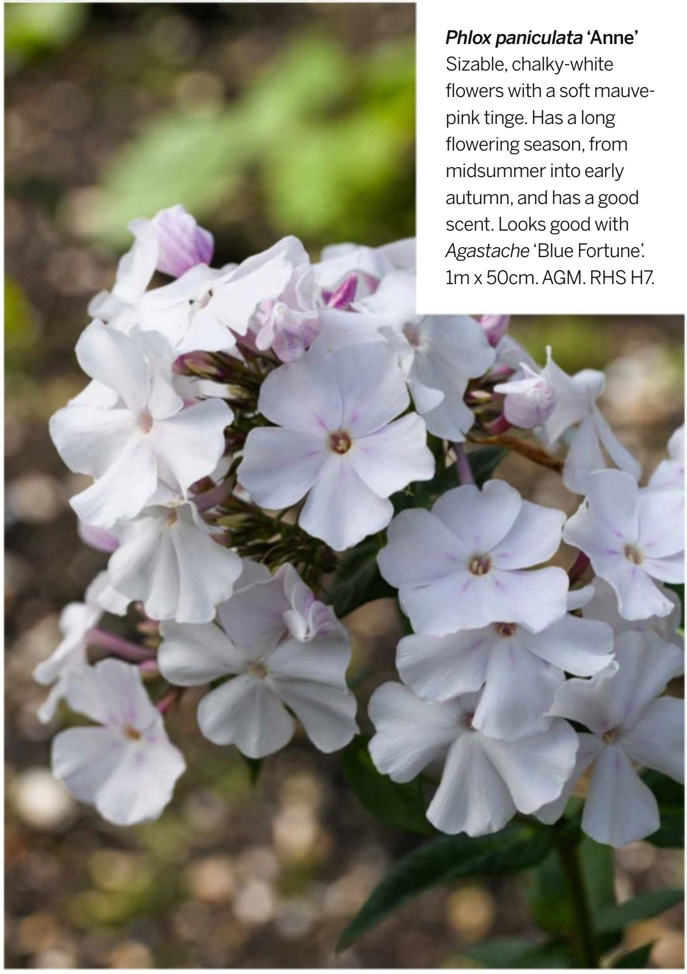
• **Stem eelworm (a nematode) is a more difficult problem.** Affected plants will look stunted and chlorotic. The only remedy is to destroy any infected plants. The area can be replanted with a different species, but phlox should not be returned to the affected patch of ground for at least three years. As with most pests and diseases, prevention is easier than the cure, and new phlox acquisitions should be quarantined for the first year so the plant can be assessed before going into the border. This also allows the plants to bulk up a bit before having to compete with more established perennials in the border.



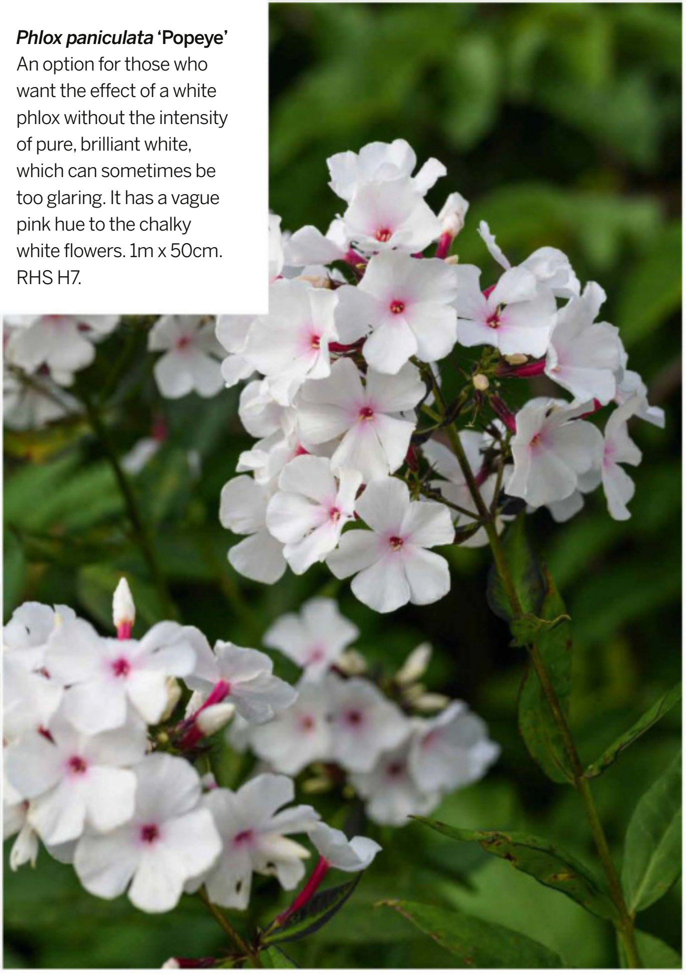
***Phlox* x *arendsii* 'Utopia'**
A pretty phlox for the back of the border with loose panicles of soft mauve flowers. This phlox is a weak grower and resents competition in the spring, and also needs staking, but it is worth the effort. 2m x 50cm. AGM. RHS H7.



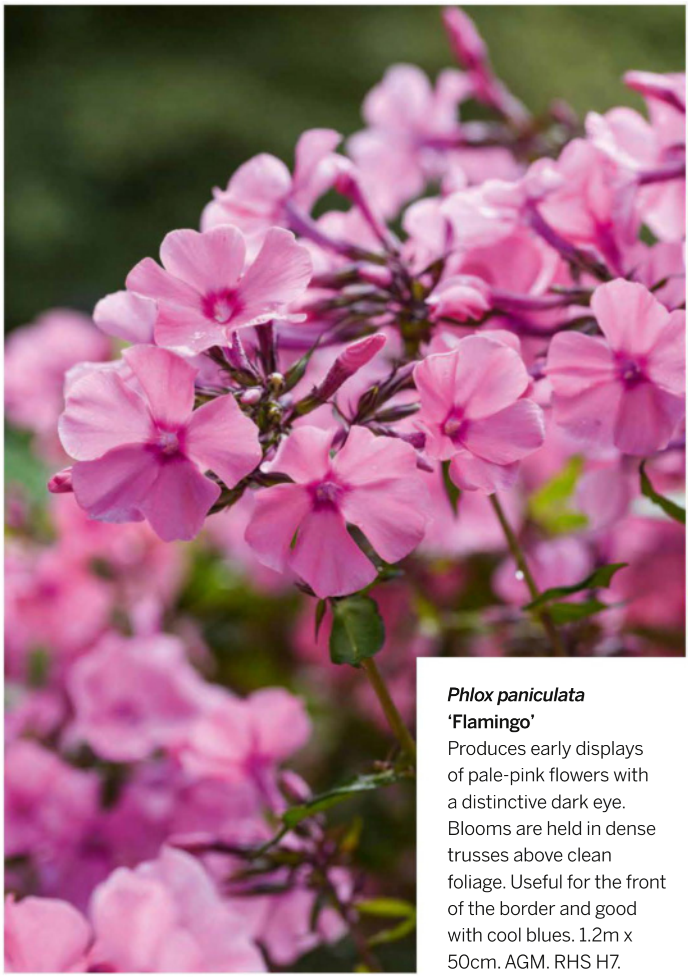
***Phlox paniculata* 'Lichtspel'**
In the Netherlands, this is affectionately known as the 'bicycle phlox' as the stems are said to be so strong you can park your bike in it. The flowers are scented and a pretty shade of mauve-pink. 1.2m x 50cm. RHS H7.



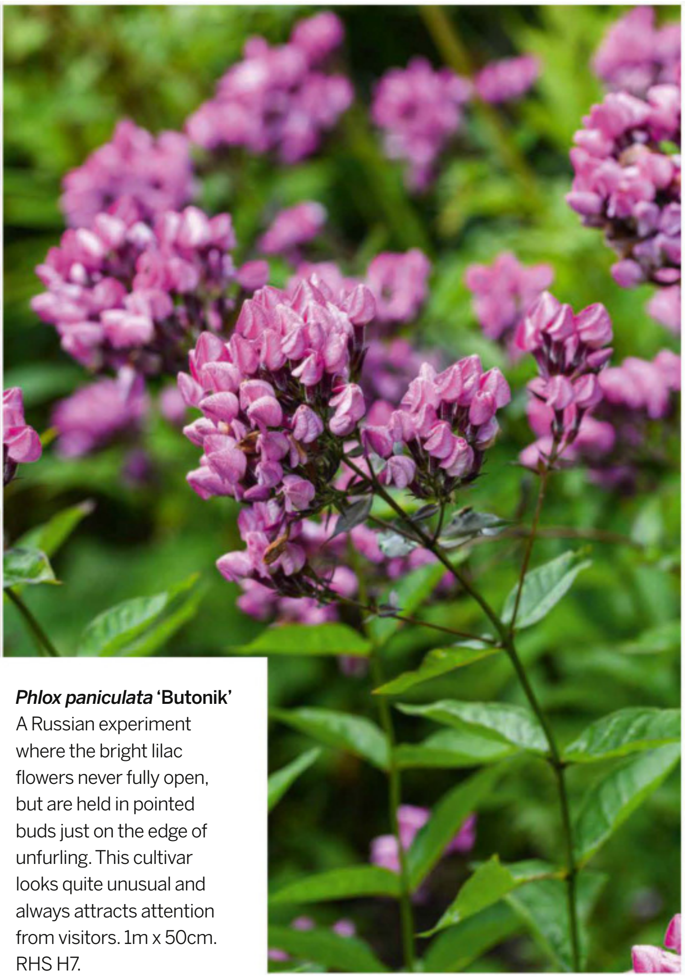
***Phlox paniculata* 'Anne'**
Sizable, chalky-white flowers with a soft mauve-pink tinge. Has a long flowering season, from midsummer into early autumn, and has a good scent. Looks good with *Agastache* 'Blue Fortune'. 1m x 50cm. AGM. RHS H7.



***Phlox paniculata* 'Popeye'**
An option for those who want the effect of a white phlox without the intensity of pure, brilliant white, which can sometimes be too glaring. It has a vague pink hue to the chalky white flowers. 1m x 50cm. RHS H7.



***Phlox paniculata* 'Flamingo'**
Produces early displays of pale-pink flowers with a distinctive dark eye. Blooms are held in dense trusses above clean foliage. Useful for the front of the border and good with cool blues. 1.2m x 50cm. AGM. RHS H7.



***Phlox paniculata* 'Butonik'**
A Russian experiment where the bright lilac flowers never fully open, but are held in pointed buds just on the edge of unfurling. This cultivar looks quite unusual and always attracts attention from visitors. 1m x 50cm. RHS H7.

MANY THANKS TO MALVERLEYS GARDEN IN HAMPSHIRE WHERE THESE IMAGES WERE TAKEN

▷ the garden when heading into autumn. They do, however, have enough presence to be used in isolation, having good clean foliage for much of the year, and as they flower later in the summer, they rarely make the garden look untidy. Even before the phlox starts to flower, the foliage is lively and vibrant. Indeed, in spring the early mounds of phlox leaves make an excellent foil and verdant backdrop for tulip flowers. The foliage is also useful for masking unsightly allium leaves, or clothing the legs of roses, which can look bare and unattractive. Likewise, they can be planted at the front of the border where neatness is particularly important.

> Having such a range of colour, height and form, there's sure to be a phlox for every position and preference

Having such a range of colour, height and form, there is sure to be a phlox suitable for every position and preference. In the White Garden at Malverleys, we use *P. paniculata* 'David', which has flower domes of dazzling, pure white, alongside *Hydrangea paniculata* and *Artemisia lactiflora*, where the contrasting habits and textures create a pleasing combination that adds dimension to the border. However, outside of the White Garden, we do find this particular shade to be a bit glaring.

Phlox paniculata 'Anne' is of similar stature with chalky-white and lilac blooms that are a clean shade of white without being overly brilliant. *P. paniculata* 'Elizabeth Arden' is a very pleasant shade of soft, rosy pink (not at all drab) with a darker eye and paler back, and always attracts attention from visitors. Icy silvers, such as *Eryngium giganteum* or *Artemisia* 'Powis Castle', complement the pink blooms, and the cool *Agastache* 'Blue Fortune' adds a pleasing blue spike to the equation. Where stronger, early pinks are needed for a punchier combination, *P. paniculata* 'Flamingo' or *P. paniculata* 'Rosa Pastell' are excellent and marry well with the metallic blues of *Eryngium* x *zabelii* Big Blue (= 'Myersblue') or the slender, lavender wands of *Veronica exaltata*. The dome-shaped inflorescences also contrast well with *Veronicastrum virginicum* and sunflowers (perennial or annual). *Phlox* x *arendsii* 'Luc's Lilac' and *P. paniculata* 'Long Border Mauve' have the height and presence to make these relationships work. ❑

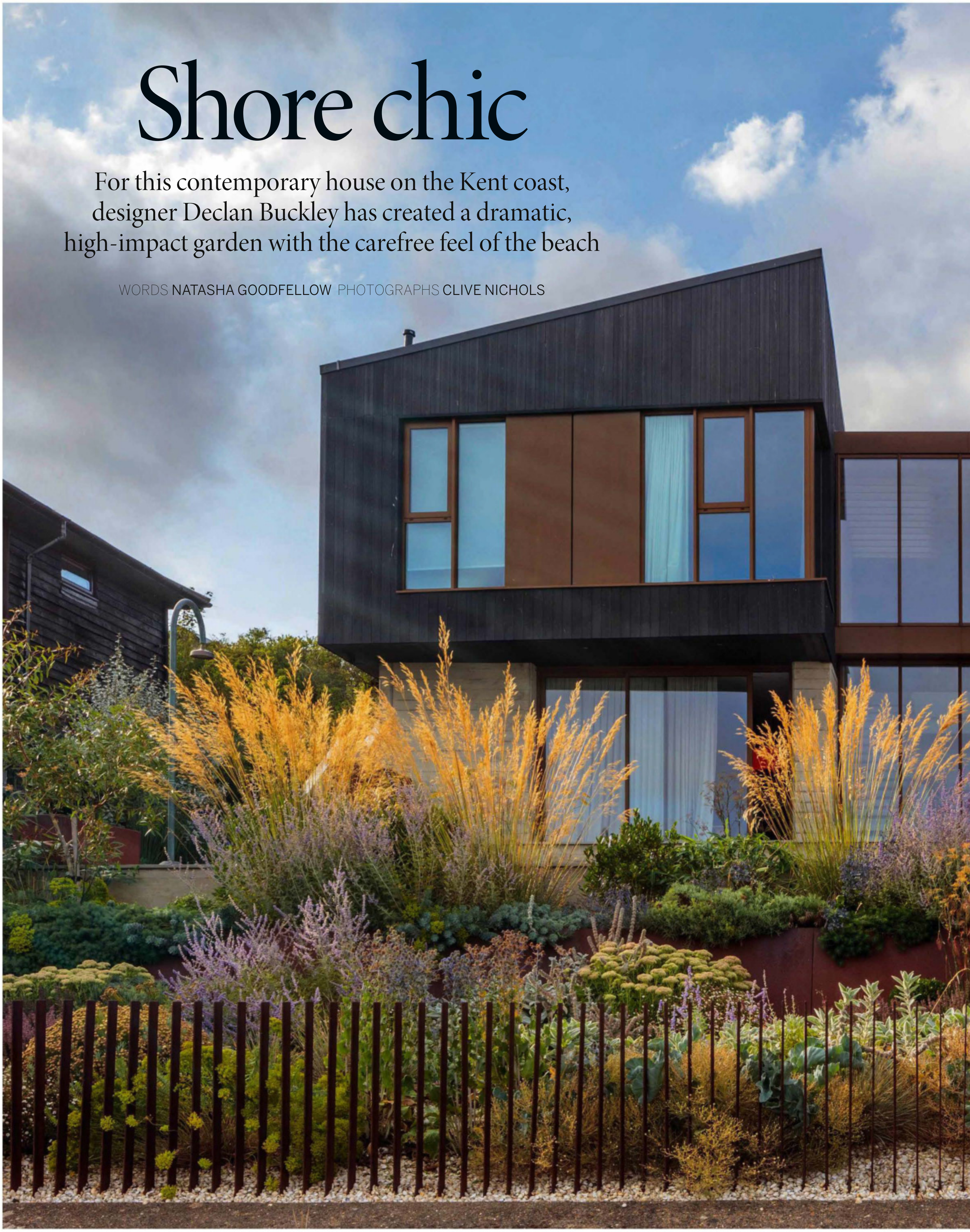
Matthew Reese is head gardener at Malverleys in Hampshire.

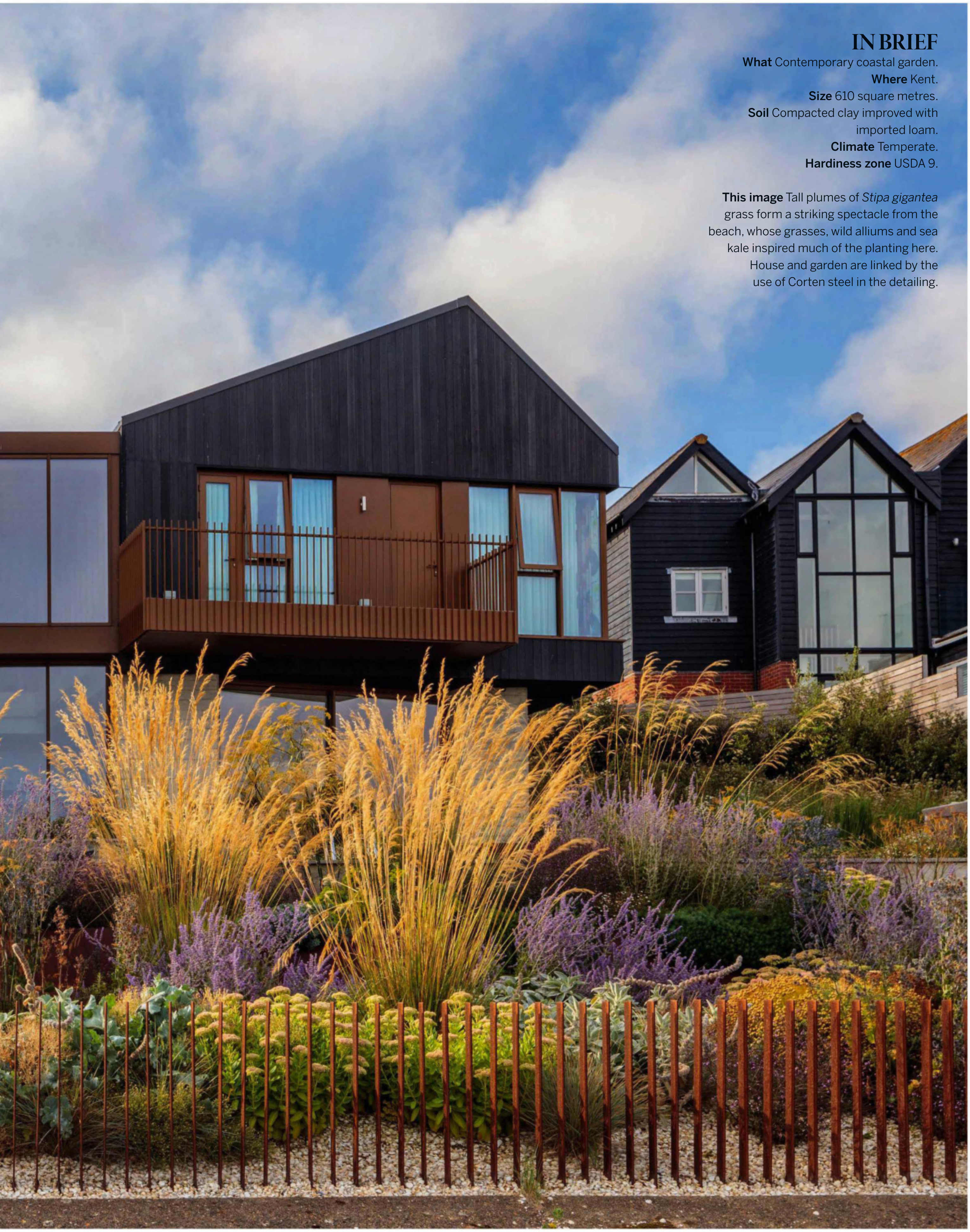
Where to see and buy
- **Dove Cottage** Shibden Hall Road, Shibden, Halifax, West Yorkshire HX3 9XA. Tel 01422 203553, dovecottagenursery.co.uk
- **Great Dixter Nursery** Northiam, Rye, East Sussex TN31 6PH. Tel 01797 254044, greatdixter.co.uk
- **The Plant Specialist** Whitefield Lane, Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire HP16 0BH. Tel 01494 866650, theplantspecialist.co.uk

Shore chic

For this contemporary house on the Kent coast, designer Declan Buckley has created a dramatic, high-impact garden with the carefree feel of the beach

WORDS **NATASHA GOODFELLOW** PHOTOGRAPHS **CLIVE NICHOLS**





IN BRIEF

What Contemporary coastal garden.
Where Kent.
Size 610 square metres.
Soil Compacted clay improved with imported loam.
Climate Temperate.
Hardiness zone USDA 9.

This image Tall plumes of *Stipa gigantea* grass form a striking spectacle from the beach, whose grasses, wild alliums and sea kale inspired much of the planting here. House and garden are linked by the use of Corten steel in the detailing.

The British seaside has many associations. Fish 'n' chips. Donkey derbies. Gritty sandwiches eaten in cagoules while hunkered behind a wind break What it is not often noted for, however, is show-stopping gardens. But here, on the beach outside Whitstable, is just such a place. Viewed from the shingle, it rises in waves of planting – fireworks of *Stipa gigantea* exploding as your eye tracks back and forth and up to the imposing new-build house above. From that vantage point, it offers a completely different perspective, stepping down to the shore in a series of terraces, neatly echoing the descent of the groynes and the tidemarks of the seaweed washed up on the beach beyond.

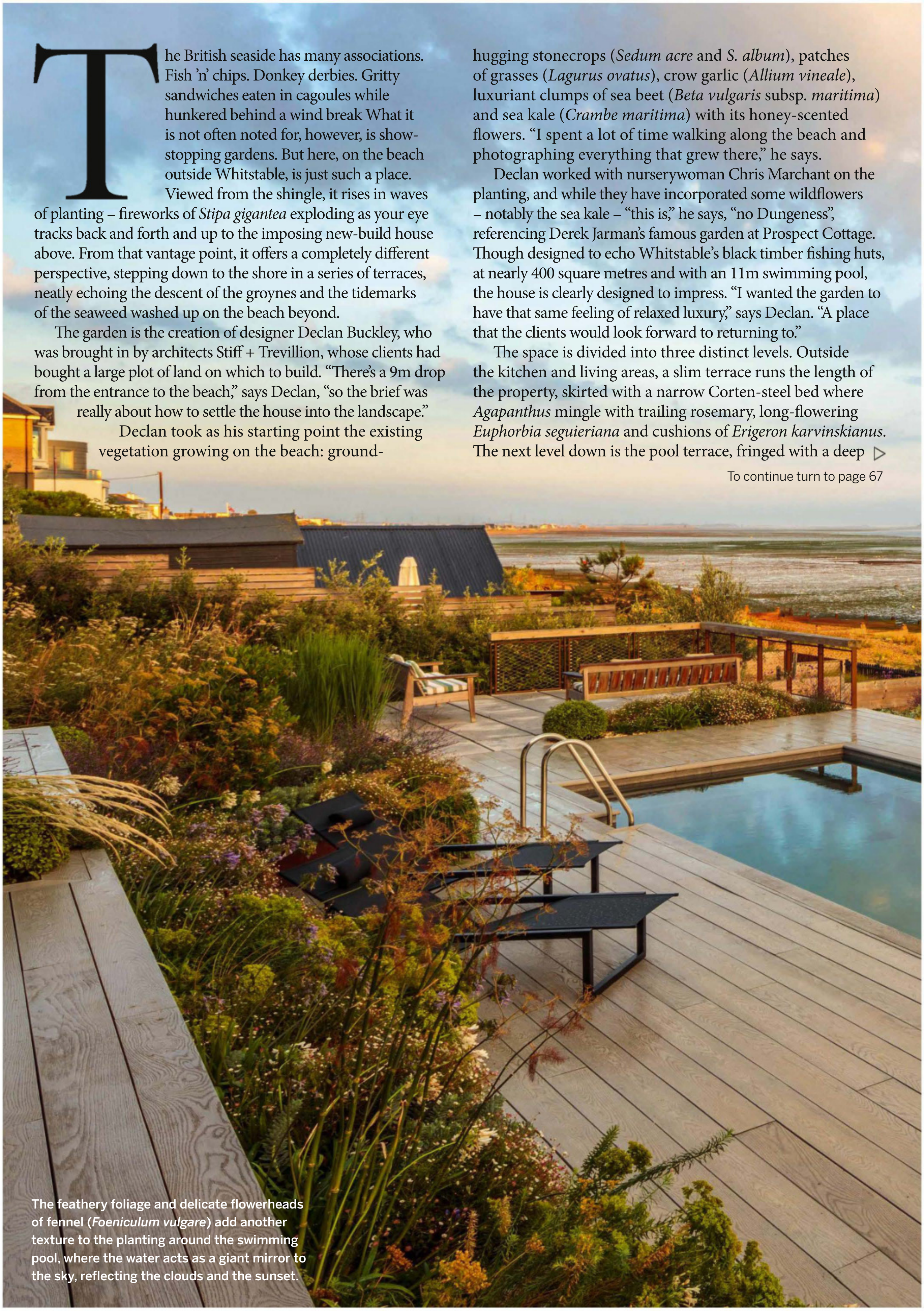
The garden is the creation of designer Declan Buckley, who was brought in by architects Stiff + Trevillion, whose clients had bought a large plot of land on which to build. "There's a 9m drop from the entrance to the beach," says Declan, "so the brief was really about how to settle the house into the landscape."

Declan took as his starting point the existing vegetation growing on the beach: ground-hugging stonecrops (*Sedum acre* and *S. album*), patches of grasses (*Lagurus ovatus*), crow garlic (*Allium vineale*), luxuriant clumps of sea beet (*Beta vulgaris* subsp. *maritima*) and sea kale (*Crambe maritima*) with its honey-scented flowers. "I spent a lot of time walking along the beach and photographing everything that grew there," he says.

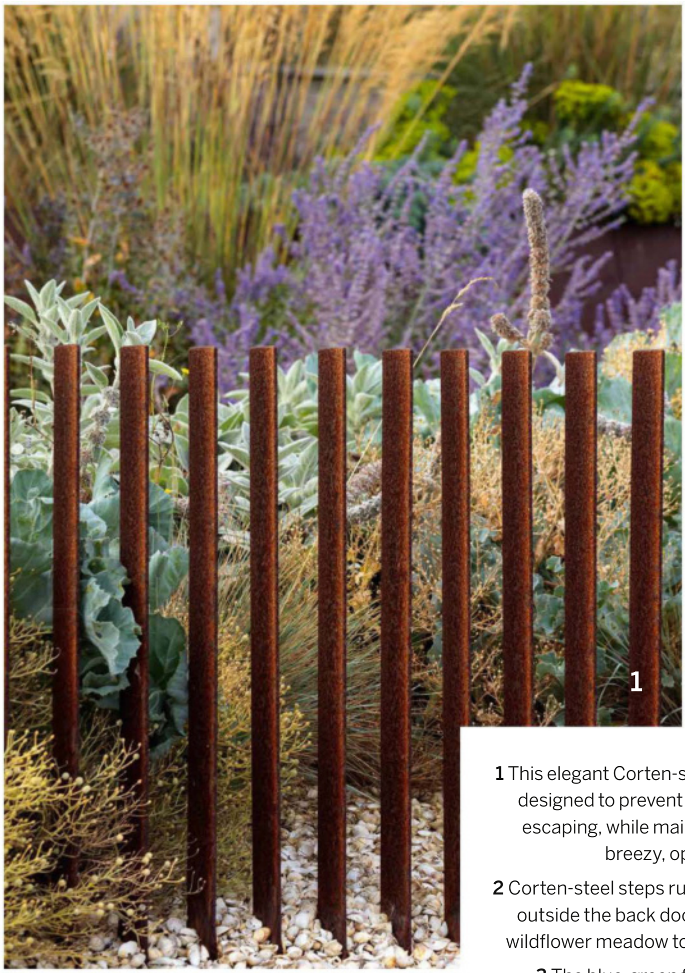
Declan worked with nurserywoman Chris Marchant on the planting, and while they have incorporated some wildflowers – notably the sea kale – "this is," he says, "no Dungeness", referencing Derek Jarman's famous garden at Prospect Cottage. Though designed to echo Whitstable's black timber fishing huts, at nearly 400 square metres and with an 11m swimming pool, the house is clearly designed to impress. "I wanted the garden to have that same feeling of relaxed luxury," says Declan. "A place that the clients would look forward to returning to."

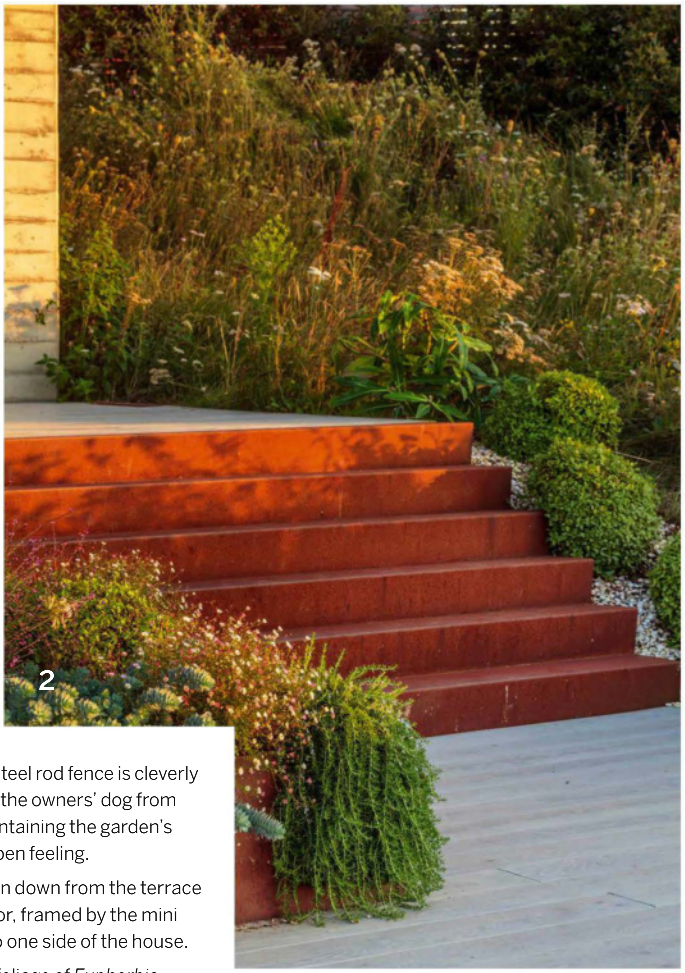
The space is divided into three distinct levels. Outside the kitchen and living areas, a slim terrace runs the length of the property, skirted with a narrow Corten-steel bed where *Agapanthus* mingle with trailing rosemary, long-flowering *Euphorbia seguieriana* and cushions of *Erigeron karvinskianus*. The next level down is the pool terrace, fringed with a deep ▷

To continue turn to page 67



The feathery foliage and delicate flowerheads of fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) add another texture to the planting around the swimming pool, where the water acts as a giant mirror to the sky, reflecting the clouds and the sunset.



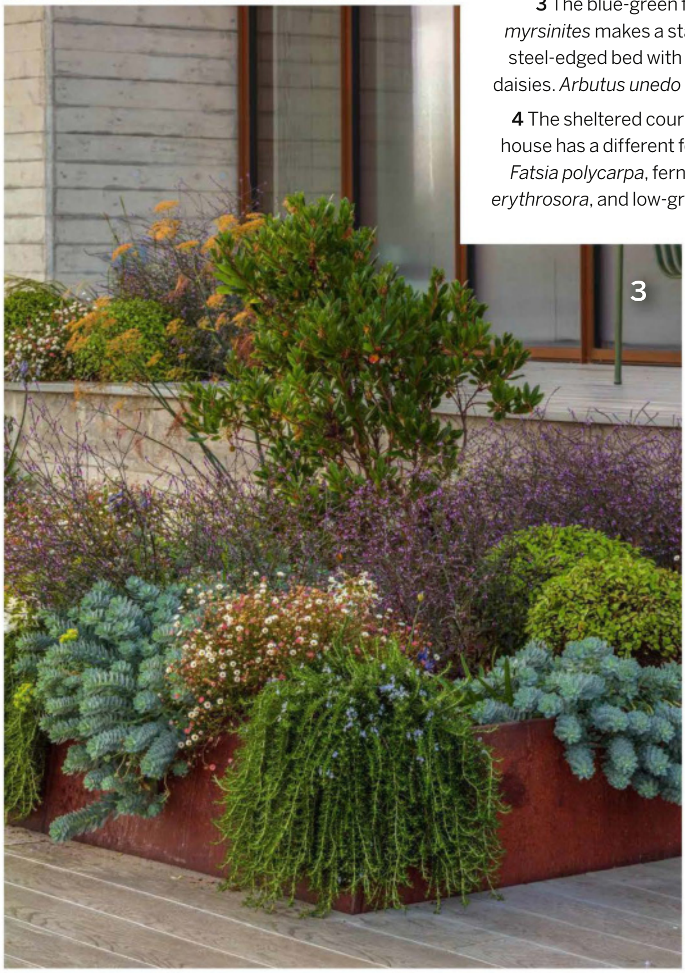


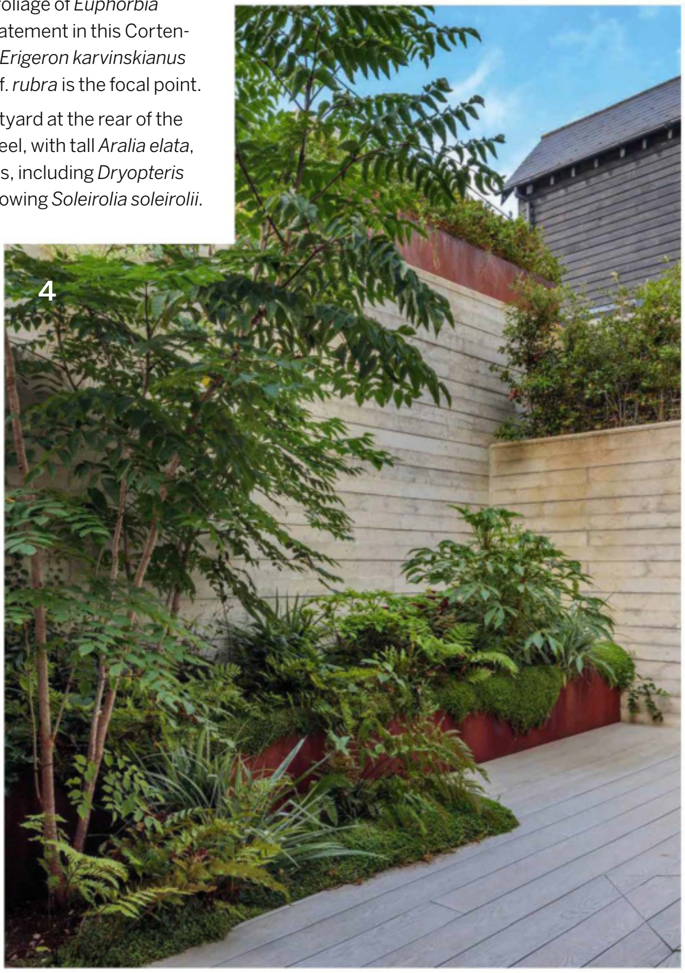
1 This elegant Corten-steel rod fence is cleverly designed to prevent the owners' dog from escaping, while maintaining the garden's breezy, open feeling.

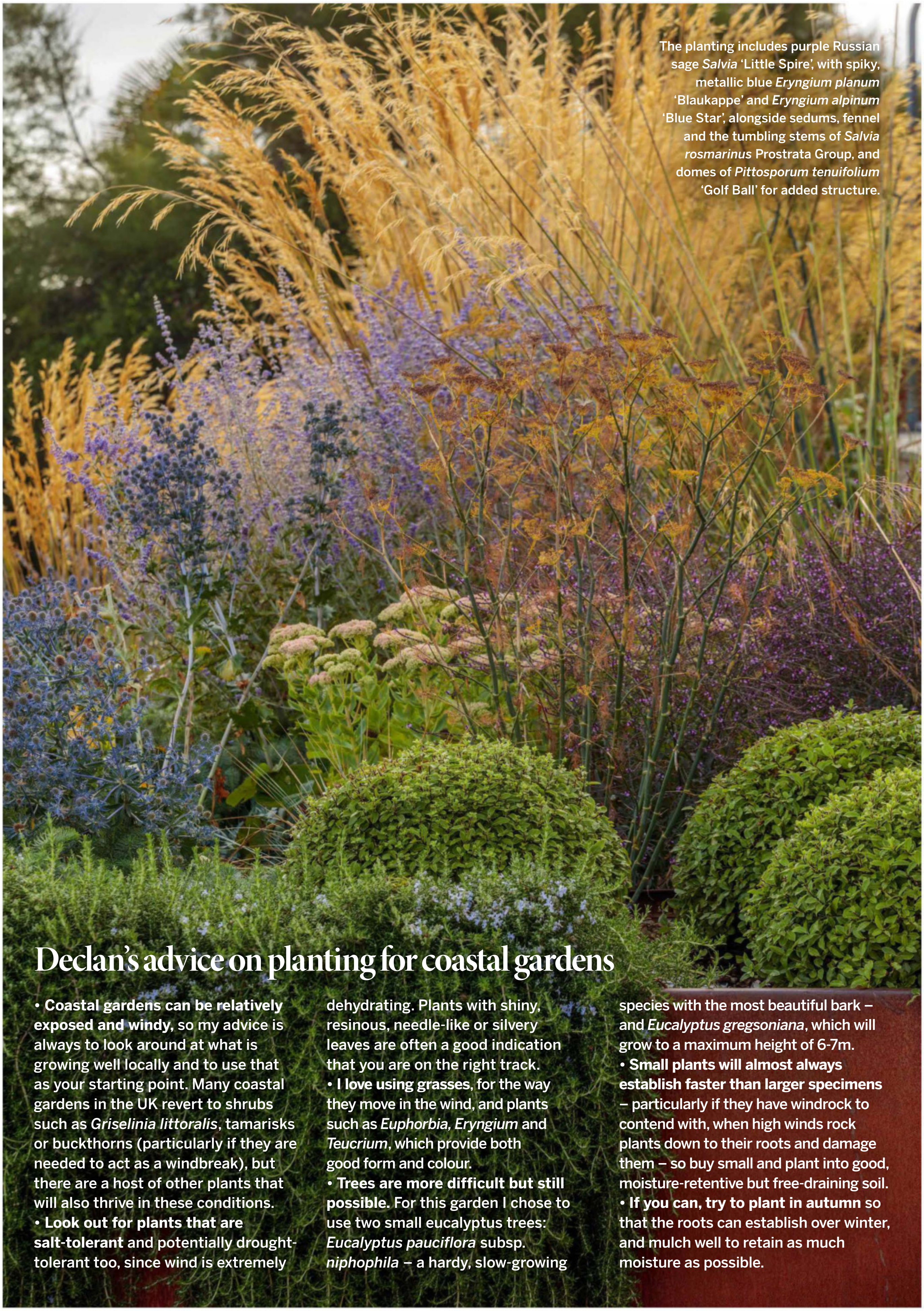
2 Corten-steel steps run down from the terrace outside the back door, framed by the mini wildflower meadow to one side of the house.

3 The blue-green foliage of *Euphorbia myrsinites* makes a statement in this Corten-steel-edged bed with *Erigeron karvinskianus* daisies. *Arbutus unedo* f. *rubra* is the focal point.

4 The sheltered courtyard at the rear of the house has a different feel, with tall *Aralia elata*, *Fatsia polycarpa*, ferns, including *Dryopteris erythrosora*, and low-growing *Soleirolia soleirolii*.



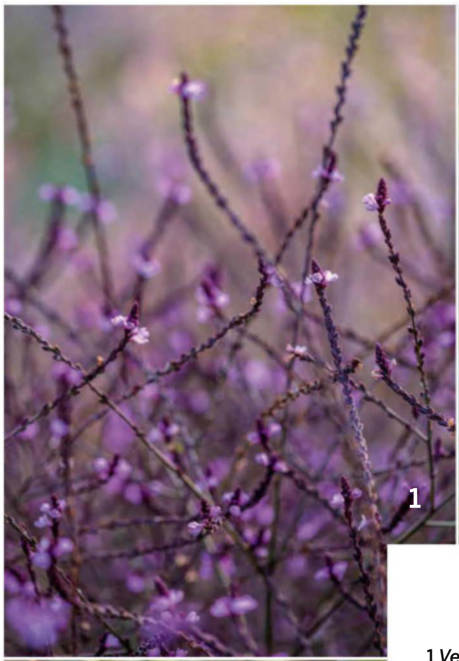


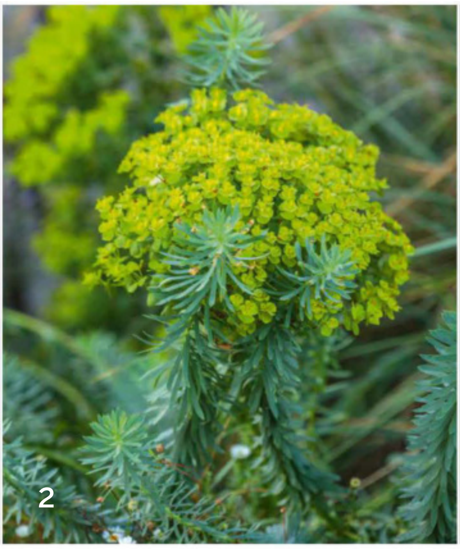


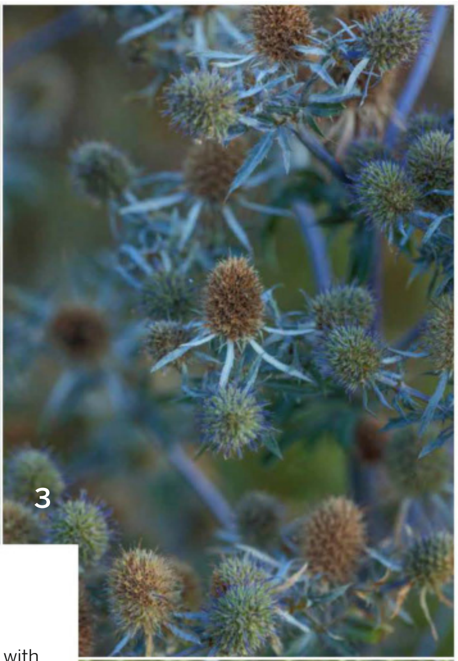
The planting includes purple Russian sage *Salvia* 'Little Spire', with spiky, metallic blue *Eryngium planum* 'Blaukappe' and *Eryngium alpinum* 'Blue Star', alongside sedums, fennel and the tumbling stems of *Salvia rosmarinus* Prostrata Group, and domes of *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Golf Ball' for added structure.

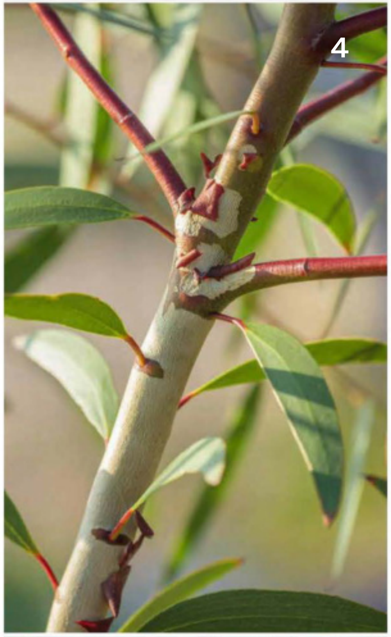
Declan's advice on planting for coastal gardens

- **Coastal gardens can be relatively exposed and windy,** so my advice is always to look around at what is growing well locally and to use that as your starting point. Many coastal gardens in the UK revert to shrubs such as *Griselinia littoralis*, tamarisks or buckthorns (particularly if they are needed to act as a windbreak), but there are a host of other plants that will also thrive in these conditions.
- **Look out for plants that are salt-tolerant** and potentially drought-tolerant too, since wind is extremely dehydrating. Plants with shiny, resinous, needle-like or silvery leaves are often a good indication that you are on the right track.
- **I love using grasses**, for the way they move in the wind, and plants such as *Euphorbia*, *Eryngium* and *Teucrium*, which provide both good form and colour.
- **Trees are more difficult but still possible.** For this garden I chose to use two small eucalyptus trees: *Eucalyptus pauciflora* subsp. *niphophila* – a hardy, slow-growing species with the most beautiful bark – and *Eucalyptus gregsoniana*, which will grow to a maximum height of 6-7m.
- **Small plants will almost always establish faster than larger specimens** – particularly if they have windrock to contend with, when high winds rock plants down to their roots and damage them – so buy small and plant into good, moisture-retentive but free-draining soil.
- **If you can, try to plant in autumn** so that the roots can establish over winter, and mulch well to retain as much moisture as possible.









8 top coastal plants

1 *Verbena officinalis* 'Bampton' A long-flowering perennial with purple-tinted leaves and vivid, pink-purple flower spikes. Best in full sun. Height and spread: 90cm x 60cm. RHS H6†.

2 *Euphorbia seguieriana* Despite its tendency to flop, this spurge is worth growing for its acid-yellow flowers, which light up the garden for months. 80cm x 80cm. RHS H5.

3 *Eryngium planum* 'Blaukappe' Beautiful, hardy and great for pollinators, this sea holly bears bobbles of small, blue flowerheads surrounded by spiky bracts. 1m x 50cm. RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.

4 *Eucalyptus gregsoniana* Much smaller than many eucalyptus species, the Wolgan snow gum has red shoots, white flowers in spring and summer and beautiful bark. 7m x 7m. RHS H5.

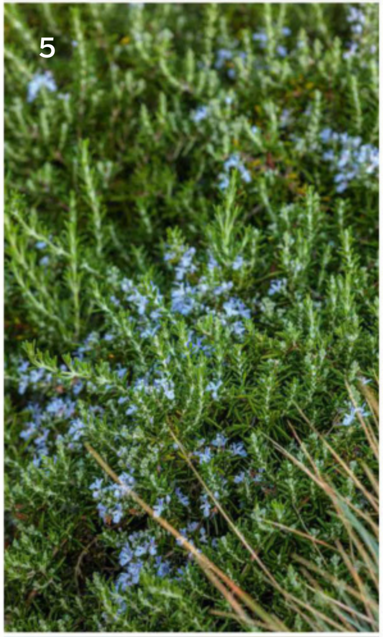
5 *Salvia rosmarinus* Prostrata Group This low-spreading, trailing rosemary has small, pale-blue flowers and aromatic leaves. 30cm x 60cm. RHS H4, USDA 8a-10b.

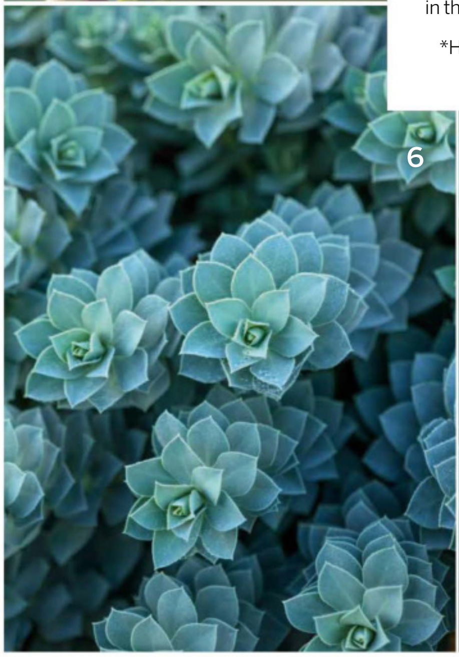
6 *Euphorbia myrsinites* Silvery, triangular leaves spiralling around trailing stems topped with lime-green flowers make this plant a talking point. 15cm x 30cm. AGM*. RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.

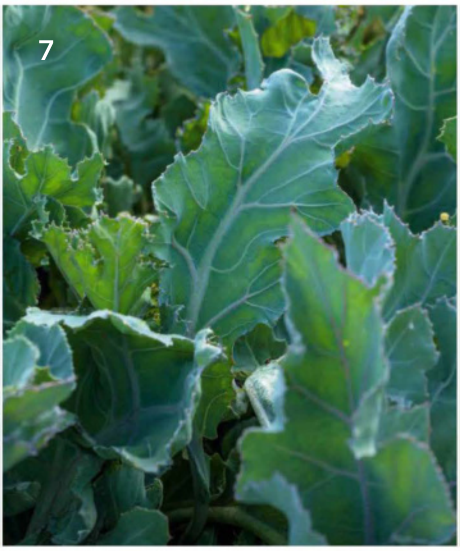
7 *Crambe maritima* Tiny, crinkly, purple and green leaves emerge each spring developing into a sizeable, eye-catching mound of foliage, crowned in summer by a cloud of honey-scented flowers. 80cm x 60cm. RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.

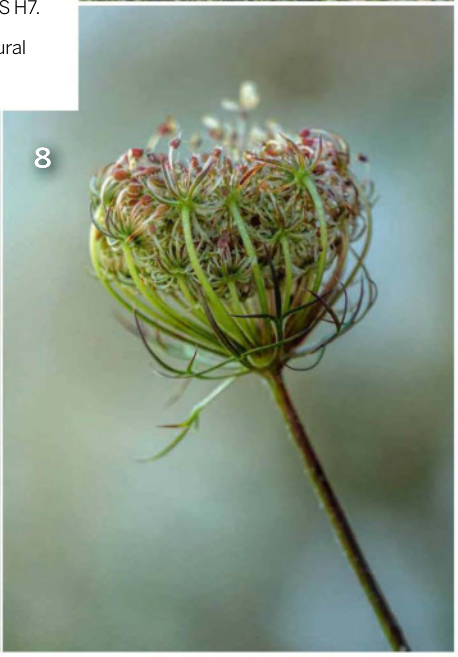
8 *Daucus carota* Pretty umbels of tiny, white flowers on tall, wiry stems make this a good cut flower as well as an attractive biennial in this garden's mini wildflower meadow. 90cm x 45cm. RHS H7.

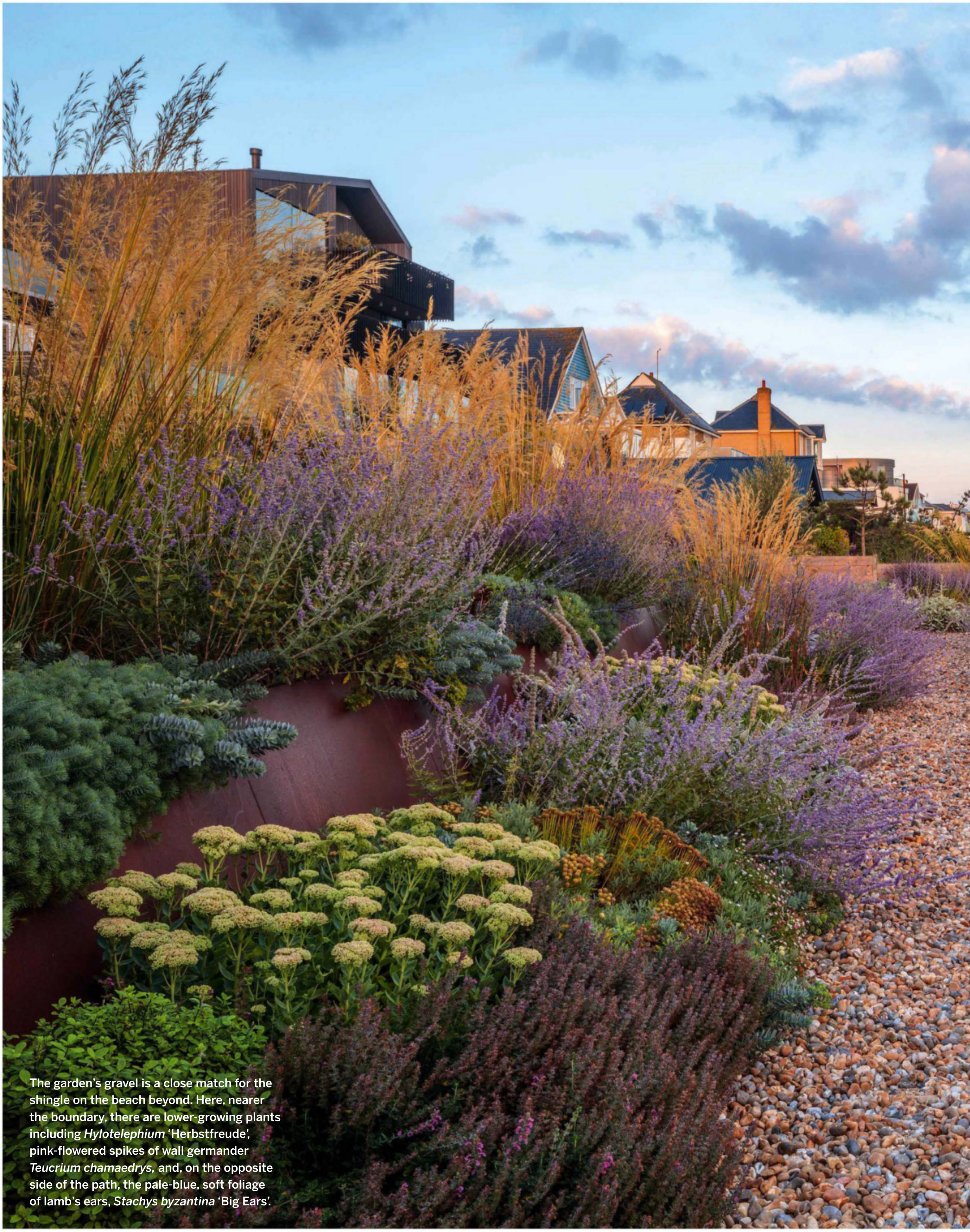
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.



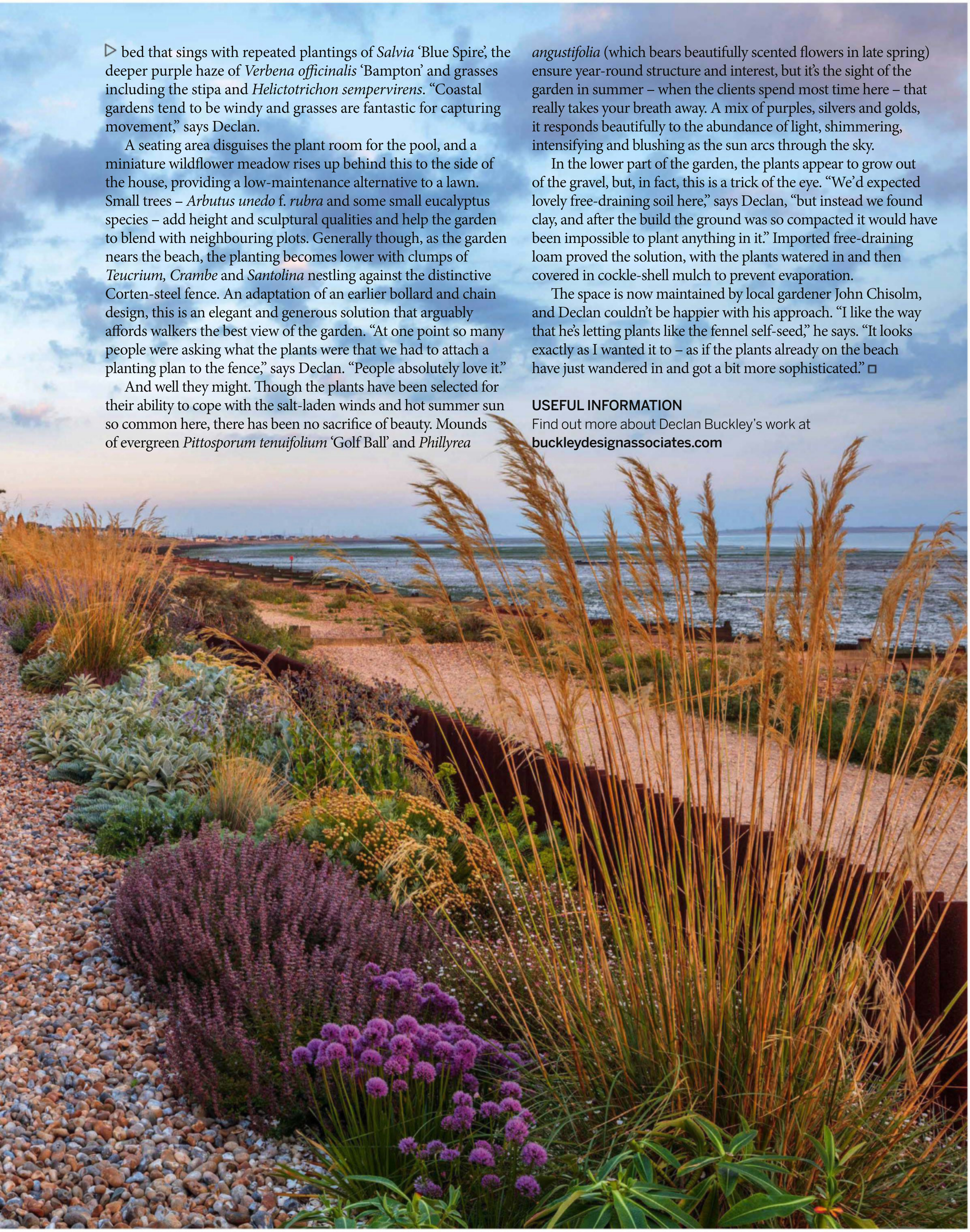








The garden's gravel is a close match for the shingle on the beach beyond. Here, nearer the boundary, there are lower-growing plants including *Hylotelephium* 'Herbstfreude', pink-flowered spikes of wall germander *Teucrium chamaedrys*, and, on the opposite side of the path, the pale-blue, soft foliage of lamb's ears, *Stachys byzantina* 'Big Ears'.



▷ bed that sings with repeated plantings of *Salvia* 'Blue Spire', the deeper purple haze of *Verbena officinalis* 'Bampton' and grasses including the stipa and *Helictotrichon sempervirens*. "Coastal gardens tend to be windy and grasses are fantastic for capturing movement," says Declan.

A seating area disguises the plant room for the pool, and a miniature wildflower meadow rises up behind this to the side of the house, providing a low-maintenance alternative to a lawn. Small trees – *Arbutus unedo* f. *rubra* and some small eucalyptus species – add height and sculptural qualities and help the garden to blend with neighbouring plots. Generally though, as the garden nears the beach, the planting becomes lower with clumps of *Teucrium, Crambe* and *Santolina* nestling against the distinctive Corten-steel fence. An adaptation of an earlier bollard and chain design, this is an elegant and generous solution that arguably affords walkers the best view of the garden. "At one point so many people were asking what the plants were that we had to attach a planting plan to the fence," says Declan. "People absolutely love it."

And well they might. Though the plants have been selected for their ability to cope with the salt-laden winds and hot summer sun so common here, there has been no sacrifice of beauty. Mounds of evergreen *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Golf Ball' and *Phillyrea angustifolia* (which bears beautifully scented flowers in late spring) ensure year-round structure and interest, but it's the sight of the garden in summer – when the clients spend most time here – that really takes your breath away. A mix of purples, silvers and golds, it responds beautifully to the abundance of light, shimmering, intensifying and blushing as the sun arcs through the sky.

In the lower part of the garden, the plants appear to grow out of the gravel, but, in fact, this is a trick of the eye. "We'd expected lovely free-draining soil here," says Declan, "but instead we found clay, and after the build the ground was so compacted it would have been impossible to plant anything in it." Imported free-draining loam proved the solution, with the plants watered in and then covered in cockle-shell mulch to prevent evaporation.

The space is now maintained by local gardener John Chisolm, and Declan couldn't be happier with his approach. "I like the way that he's letting plants like the fennel self-seed," he says. "It looks exactly as I wanted it to – as if the plants already on the beach have just wandered in and got a bit more sophisticated." ◻

USEFUL INFORMATION

Find out more about Declan Buckley's work at **buckleydesignassociates.com**

CLAIRE AUSTIN

The award-winning nurserywoman on the joys of growing, the importance of sharing horticultural knowledge and her relaxed approach to weeding

WORDS CLAIRE MASSET PORTRAIT JOE WAINWRIGHT

It's now 25 years since Claire Austin started her eponymous nursery, which specialises in hardy perennials, irises and peonies, and offers a mouth-watering catalogue of more than 1,500 different plants. "I've tried to reduce the number, but I just can't resist them," Claire confesses. It's no secret that she is the daughter of the late, great rose grower David Austin, but growing up, it was her mother who influenced her most. "My father worked as a farmer then. It was my mother who was the gardener."

In her late teens, Claire followed in her mother's footsteps and went to art college. After that she lived in Tanzania for a couple of years with her then husband. "When we came back, we didn't know what to do. So John (my ex) and I started working for my father." The year was 1983 and David Austin was becoming an established name in the rose world, having just introduced *Rosa* Mary Rose (= 'Ausmary') and *R.* Graham Thomas (= 'Ausmas') to great acclaim. "My father was also diversifying into what he called florists' flowers, such as peonies and irises," says Claire. (She is now also a National Collection Holder of both bearded irises and hybrid herbaceous peonies.) "I started tending them, but I looked after the roses too, and the customers. It was more by default that I ended up in horticulture."

GROWING PLANTS IS ONE OF THE BEST THINGS YOU CAN DO. IT'S SOMETHING EVERYONE CAN SHARE

In her early forties, Claire had a choice of starting her own nursery or doing something else. She has no regrets about the path she took. "Nurseries are hard work, but they are so rewarding. Growing plants is one of the best things you can do. Gardening does everything for you – it's physical, it's creative and it's good for the environment. It's something everyone can do and share in."

Nowadays Claire runs the nursery with her husband Ric and nine other staff. She feels lucky to be able to grow a wide range of plants from her rural location in the Welsh Marches, which accommodates both damp- and dry-loving species. And she has no interest in Plant Breeders' Rights, believing firmly that plants should be shared as much as possible. That's why she is always on the look-out for unusual varieties that might spontaneously pop up in her one-and-a-half-acre garden at White Hopton Farm. "I never let anyone weed because I don't know what seedling I might miss. I find so many things: geraniums, persicarias, pulmonarias, geums." Irises are the only plant Claire actively breeds, and at the farm there is also her gorgeous and much-photographed bearded iris field, which on a warm day gives off the most amazing aroma.

Her garden, which she opens to visitors once a year, has been described as 'cottagey', but she likes to call it organic. "I have lots of peonies and tree peonies and I grow everything through them." Before anyone had really heard of them in the UK, Claire championed intersectional peonies. "They are excellent from many points of view – they have great leaves, are more shrubby and flower longer than standard peonies."

Aside from her mother, another inspiration was the horticulturist Graham Stuart Thomas. "Graham was one of my father's good friends. He was like a great-uncle to me." Claire, who is dyslexic, recalls how Graham would help her with the text for her nursery catalogues. "I'd send him the copy and he would return it full of his tiny, spidery handwriting. His book, *Perennial Garden Plants*, had a big influence on me."

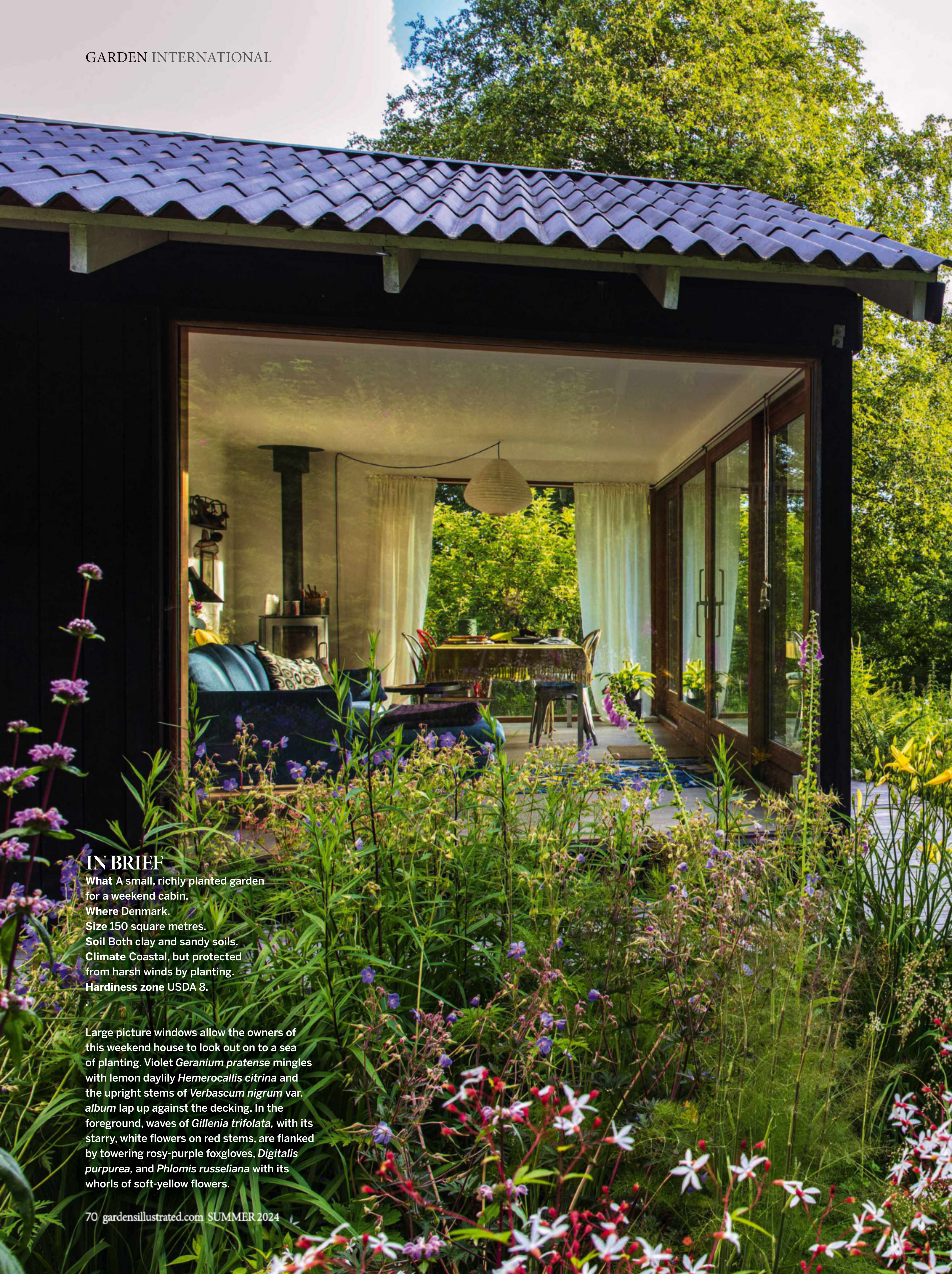
And Claire has gone on to write her own books – five in total – on perennials, irises and peonies. Her *Book of Perennials* was reissued as a new edition in 2020, and continues to be a well-thumbed reference for gardeners around the world. "I want to redo my irises book this autumn. Hopefully, I'll publish it next spring." Like a true entrepreneur, she self-publishes, and the results are both commercially successful and visually stunning. Her inspiring photos and design work are combined with clear, expert text. As she says: "I'm not very good at airy-fairy. I'm very literal." Purple prose is not her thing, and her readers appreciate that.

Down to earth and no nonsense, Claire is known for speaking her mind, and believes this is why she was recently asked to join the RHS Council, the governing body responsible for running the gardening charity. "I've been there nearly a year and it's been a fascinating experience seeing how it looks from inside the organisation. Having been a bit sceptical about it in the past, I am now most admiring of the RHS and how hard everyone works."

Looking to the future, Claire says she doesn't want to ever give up, but admits "it would be nice if someone else could take the reins, and Ric and I could potter around". She'd like to have more time to paint, a hobby to which she has recently returned, but she's prepared to go with the flow and see what happens. Claire's approach to life, much like her garden, is organic. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

The nursery is online only but hosts occasional talks and annual open days. Check website for details: **claireaustin-hardyplants.co.uk**



IN BRIEF

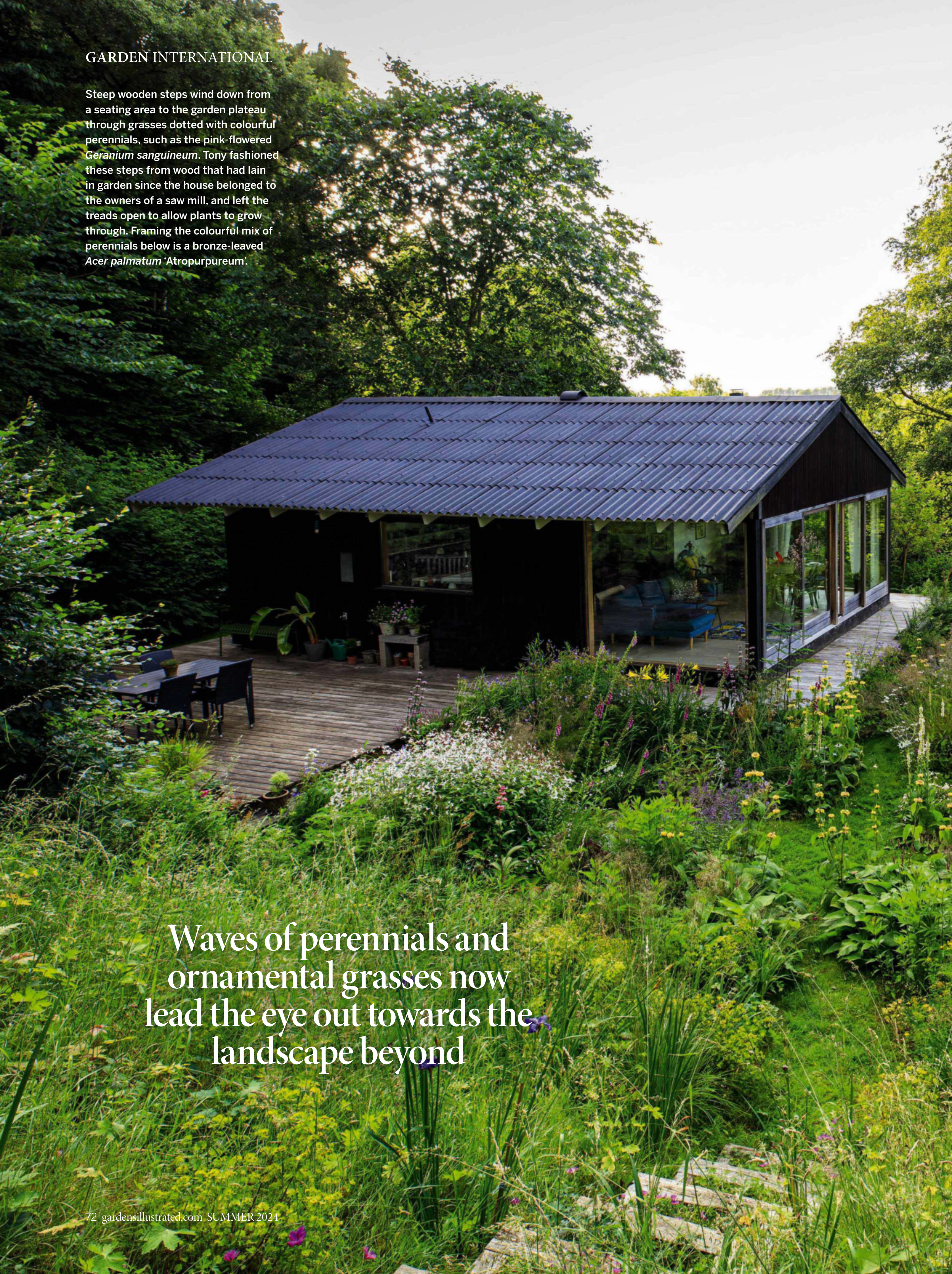
What A small, richly planted garden for a weekend cabin.
Where Denmark.
Size 150 square metres.
Soil Both clay and sandy soils.
Climate Coastal, but protected from harsh winds by planting.
Hardiness zone USDA 8.

Large picture windows allow the owners of this weekend house to look out on to a sea of planting. Violet *Geranium pratense* mingles with lemon daylily *Hemerocallis citrina* and the upright stems of *Verbascum nigrum* var. *album* lap up against the decking. In the foreground, waves of *Gillenia trifolata,* with its starry, white flowers on red stems, are flanked by towering rosy-purple foxgloves, *Digitalis purpurea,* and *Phlomis russeliana* with its whorls of soft-yellow flowers.

Sea of colour

For this weekend bolthole, designer Tony Skovsende created a relaxed, low-maintenance garden with generous drifts of perennials and grasses

WORDS TOMMY TØNSBERG PHOTOGRAPHS CLAIRE TAKACS



Steep wooden steps wind down from a seating area to the garden plateau through grasses dotted with colourful perennials, such as the pink-flowered *Geranium sanguineum*. Tony fashioned these steps from wood that had lain in garden since the house belonged to the owners of a saw mill, and left the treads open to allow plants to grow through. Framing the colourful mix of perennials below is a bronze-leaved *Acer palmatum* 'Atropurpureum'.

Waves of perennials and ornamental grasses now lead the eye out towards the landscape beyond

Close to the Danish coast, in a protected conservation area, sits a charming house, with a small but intimate garden bursting with colourful planting. Just a 45-minute drive from Copenhagen, it's the perfect weekend and summer retreat for its owners. But when they bought the property seven years ago, this lovely plant-filled garden was little more than a large lawn and a tangle of a particularly unwanted weed.

"The first thing we needed to do was get rid of the Japanese knotweed," says Danish designer Tony Skovsende, who the owners turned to for help. Tony runs the Copenhagen-based garden design studio Den Naturlige Have (the Natural Garden), which specialises in creating nature-inspired gardens. Once he had tackled the knotweed, Tony set about replacing the lawn with broad plantings of perennials and ornamental grasses, divided by grass paths. "The garden is all about the planting design," he explains. "Paths, terraces, sheds and other hard surfaces are of secondary importance, and they can hardly be seen as they're covered with plants. Apart from the little wooden deck, there is no hard landscaping, and the furniture is light and can be moved around for shade or sun. It is all very relaxed and informal."

Since the owners rarely use the property in the colder months, Tony was able to ignore many of the more structural garden elements he would normally use to add winter interest, and focus instead on the planting. Through careful selection he has ensured the garden offers flowering interest in the garden from early spring to autumn. Instead of a lawn, waves of perennials and ornamental grasses now lead the eye out towards the landscape beyond. Frothy perennials in bloom, such as *Gillenia trifoliata* and *Nepeta* x *faassenii*, and various ornamental grasses are interspersed with the towering spires of *Verbascum nigrum* var. *album*, foxgloves and phlomis.

Taller, lighter perennials create height and allow views through them to the rest of the planting and the wider landscape. The round, pincushion-like flowers of *Knautia macedonica* on ▷

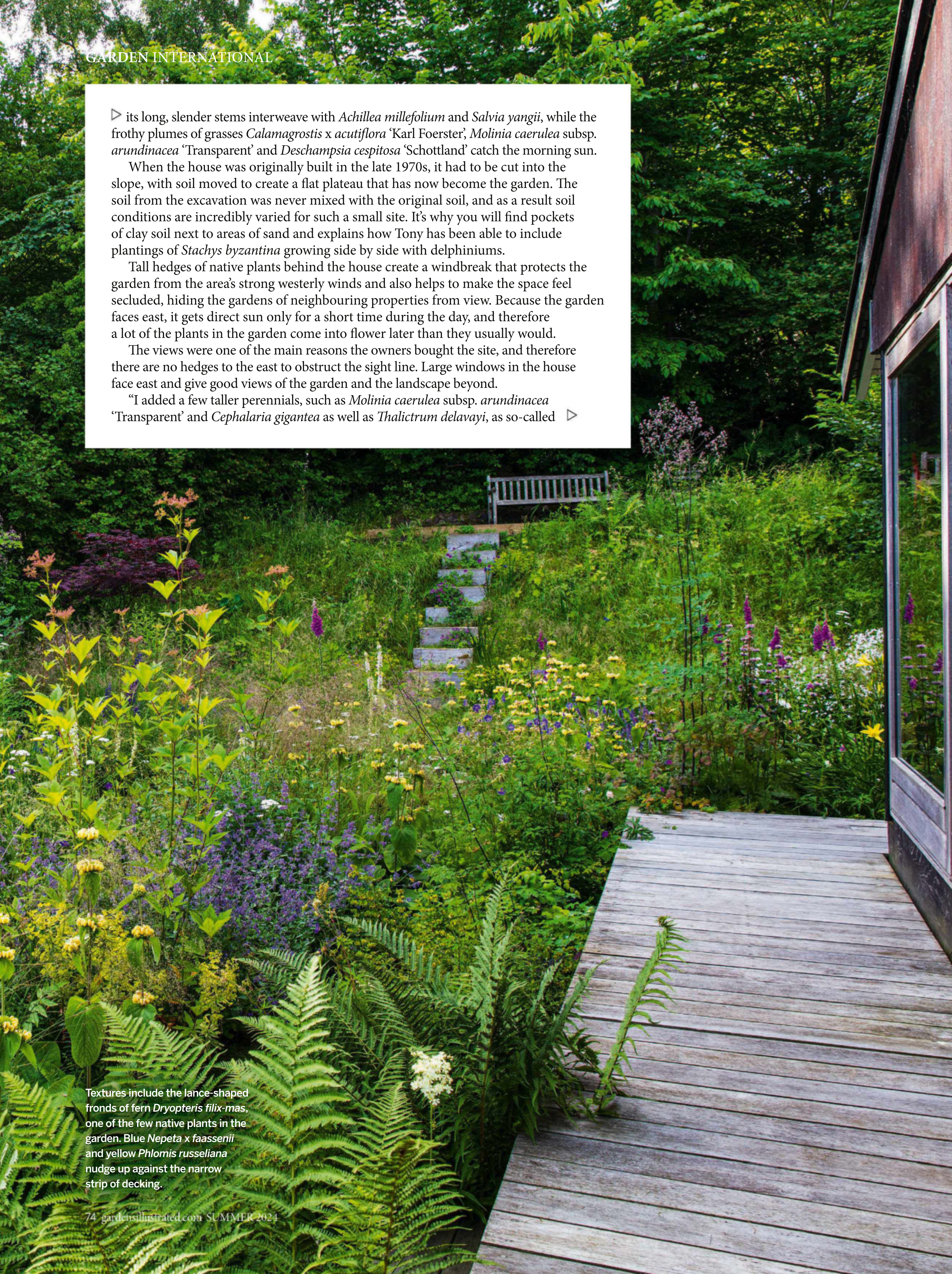
▷ its long, slender stems interweave with *Achillea millefolium* and *Salvia yangii*, while the frothy plumes of grasses *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster', *Molinia caerulea* subsp. *arundinacea* 'Transparent' and *Deschampsia cespitosa* 'Schottland' catch the morning sun.

When the house was originally built in the late 1970s, it had to be cut into the slope, with soil moved to create a flat plateau that has now become the garden. The soil from the excavation was never mixed with the original soil, and as a result soil conditions are incredibly varied for such a small site. It's why you will find pockets of clay soil next to areas of sand and explains how Tony has been able to include plantings of *Stachys byzantina* growing side by side with delphiniums.

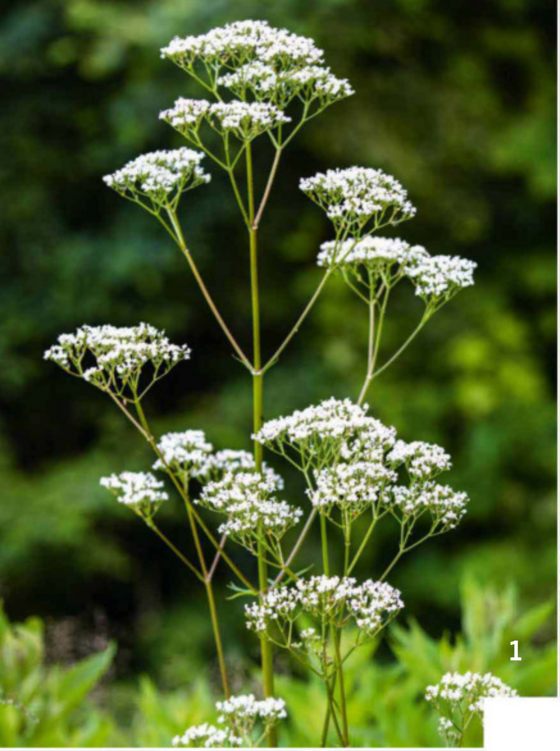
Tall hedges of native plants behind the house create a windbreak that protects the garden from the area's strong westerly winds and also helps to make the space feel secluded, hiding the gardens of neighbouring properties from view. Because the garden faces east, it gets direct sun only for a short time during the day, and therefore a lot of the plants in the garden come into flower later than they usually would.

The views were one of the main reasons the owners bought the site, and therefore there are no hedges to the east to obstruct the sight line. Large windows in the house face east and give good views of the garden and the landscape beyond.

"I added a few taller perennials, such as *Molinia caerulea* subsp. *arundinacea* 'Transparent' and *Cephalaria gigantea* as well as *Thalictrum delavayi*, as so-called ▷



Textures include the lance-shaped fronds of fern *Dryopteris filix-mas*, one of the few native plants in the garden. Blue *Nepeta* x *faassenii* and yellow *Phlomis russeliana* nudge up against the narrow strip of decking.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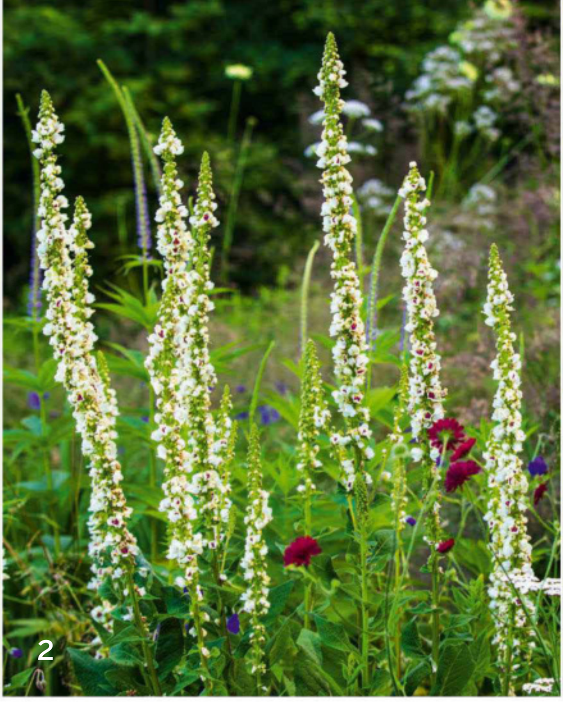
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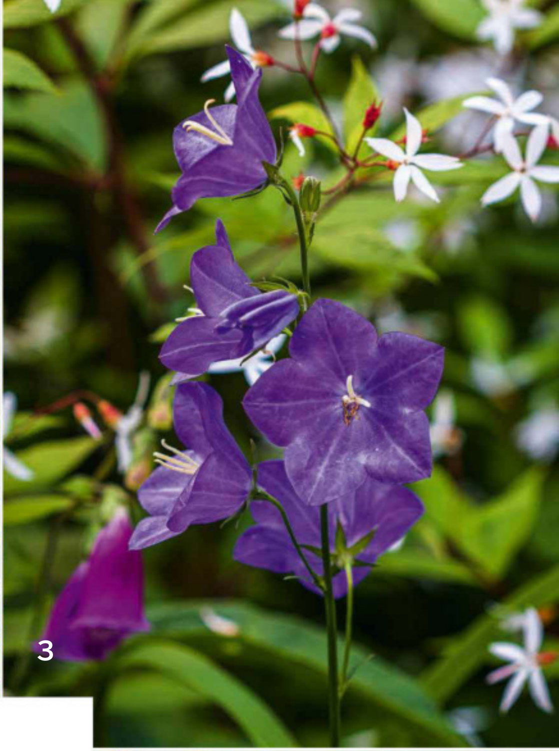
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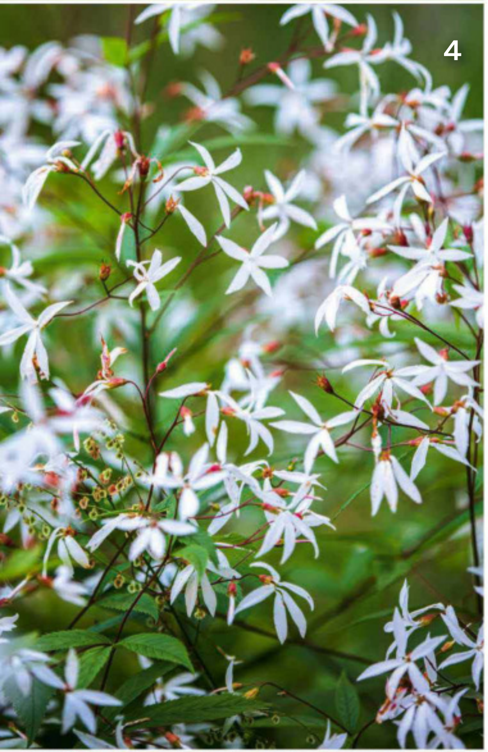
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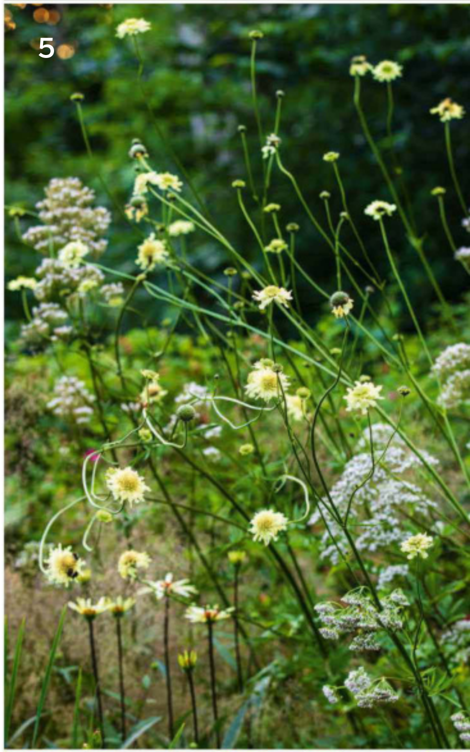
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Tony's 8 key plants

1 *Valeriana officinalis* Tall, clump-forming plant topped with pale-pink flowers between June and August. Gives an airy effect in the garden. Native to Europe and the UK. Height and spread: 1.2-2m x 1m. RHS H4, USDA 4a-7b[†].

2 *Verbascum nigrum* var. *album* Spires of white flowers with lovely purple stamens. A clump-forming perennial that will self-seed. The species is native through Scandinavia to Spain. 1.2m x 50cm. RHS H6.

3 *Campanula persicifolia* Large, soft-blue bells on erect stems between July and August. Native to parts of Europe including Denmark. 60-80cm x 50cm. RHS H7, USDA 3a-7b.

4 *Gillenia trifoliata* A lovely, bushy, clump-forming perennial covered in white flowers in late spring and early summer. Does not require staking. Good autumn colour. 1.2m x 50cm. AGM*. RHS H7.

5 *Cephalaria gigantea* A wonderfully tall, see-through perennial topped with soft-yellow pincushion flowers. The long stems give this plant an airy effect. Can self-seed. 2.5m x 1m. RHS H7, USDA 3a-7b.

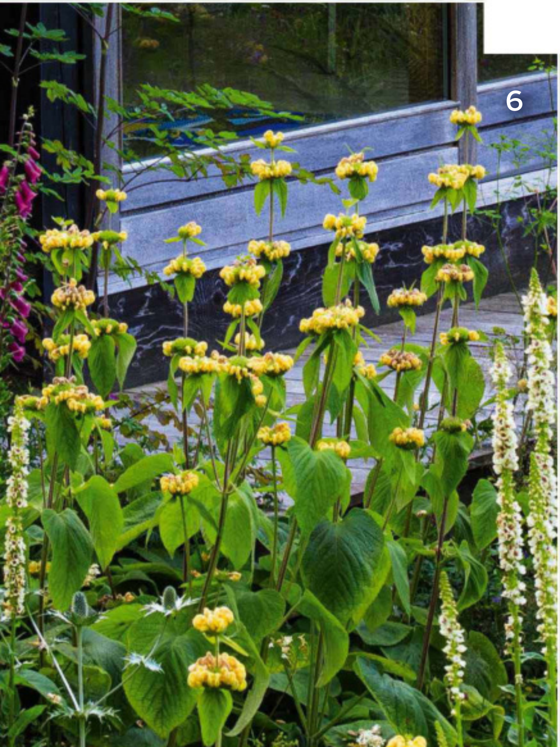
6 *Phlomis russeliana* Slender spires adorned with yellow flowers in summer. The leaves of this clump-forming perennial are felted, almost giving the foliage a silver look. 90cm x 70cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

7 *Phlomoides tuberosa* Pink flowers are borne in whorls on long, slender stems in summer. This clump-forming perennial has leaves that are deeply veined and serrated at the edges. 1.2-1.5m x 60cm. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.

8 *Geranium sanguineum* A bushy perennial with spreading underground rhizomes. Beautiful flowers in carmine red or other pink and purple tones. Native to most of Europe. 15-50cm x 50cm. RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.

[†] Hardiness ratings given where available.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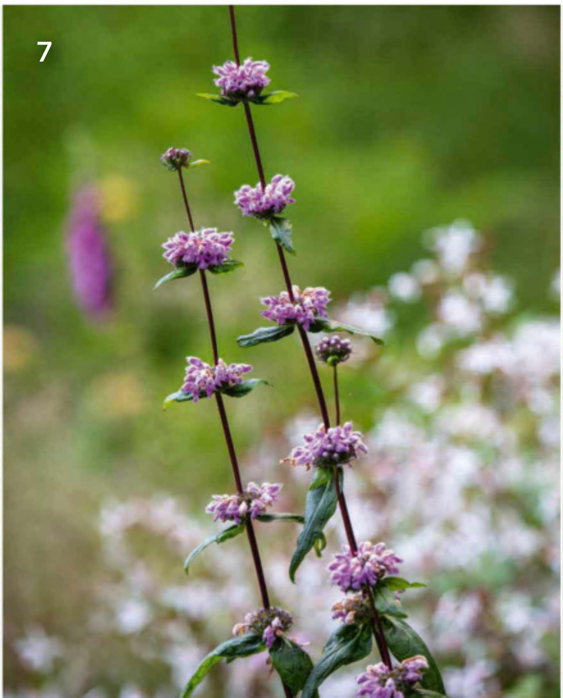
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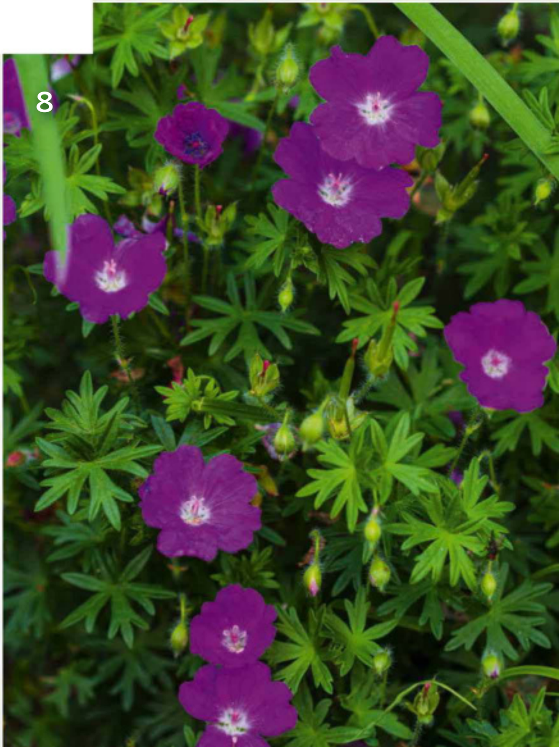
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The garden is never watered, so the plants need to survive on rainfall, and get by mostly on their own

▷ ‘see-through’ plants to create a sense of height, both to give interest and to allow for views of the landscape through the planting.”

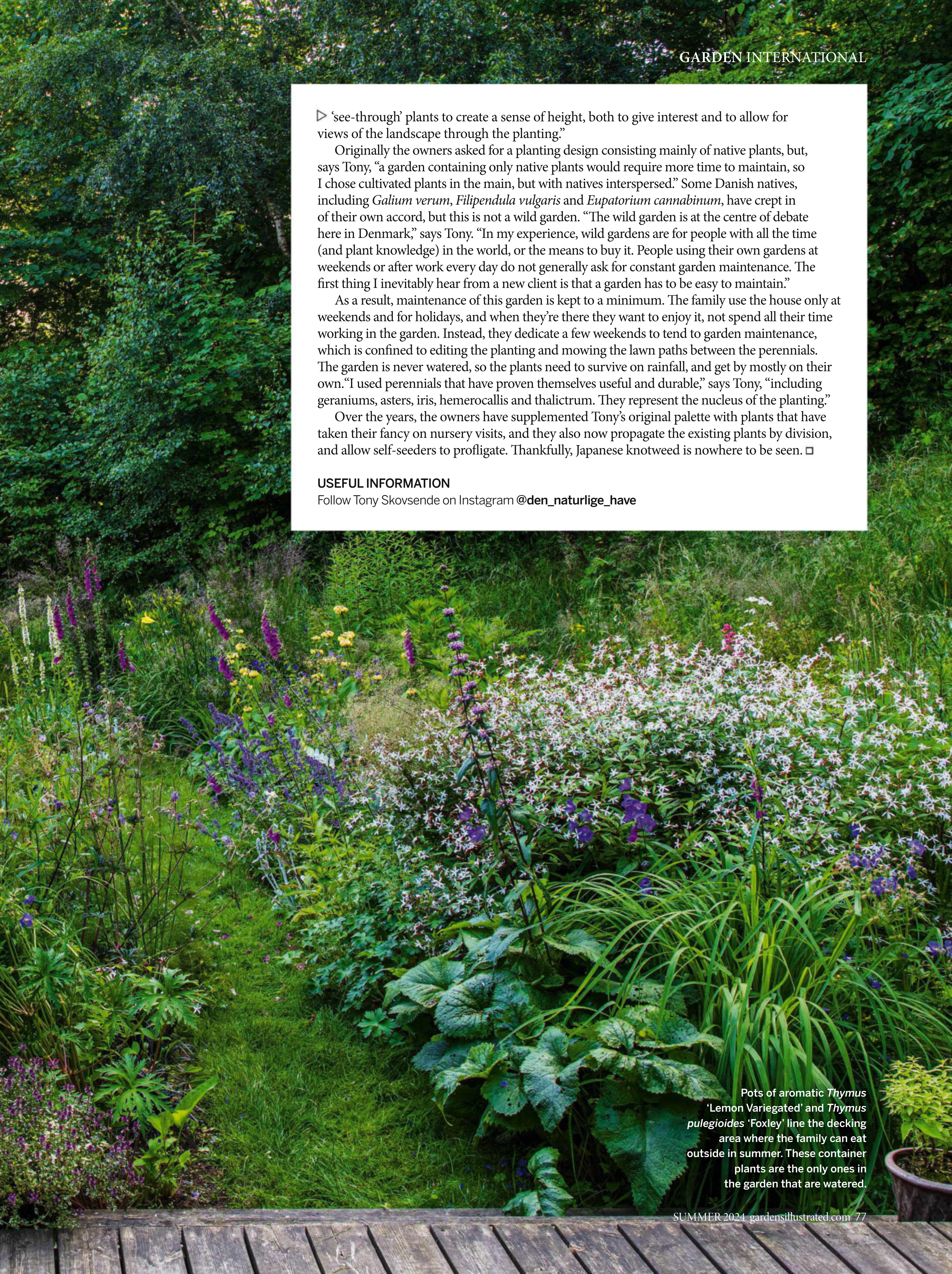
Originally the owners asked for a planting design consisting mainly of native plants, but, says Tony, “a garden containing only native plants would require more time to maintain, so I chose cultivated plants in the main, but with natives interspersed.” Some Danish natives, including *Galium verum*, *Filipendula vulgaris* and *Eupatorium cannabinum*, have crept in of their own accord, but this is not a wild garden. “The wild garden is at the centre of debate here in Denmark,” says Tony. “In my experience, wild gardens are for people with all the time (and plant knowledge) in the world, or the means to buy it. People using their own gardens at weekends or after work every day do not generally ask for constant garden maintenance. The first thing I inevitably hear from a new client is that a garden has to be easy to maintain.”

As a result, maintenance of this garden is kept to a minimum. The family use the house only at weekends and for holidays, and when they’re there they want to enjoy it, not spend all their time working in the garden. Instead, they dedicate a few weekends to tend to garden maintenance, which is confined to editing the planting and mowing the lawn paths between the perennials. The garden is never watered, so the plants need to survive on rainfall, and get by mostly on their own. “I used perennials that have proven themselves useful and durable,” says Tony, “including geraniums, asters, iris, hemerocallis and thalictrum. They represent the nucleus of the planting.”

Over the years, the owners have supplemented Tony’s original palette with plants that have taken their fancy on nursery visits, and they also now propagate the existing plants by division, and allow self-seeders to profligate. Thankfully, Japanese knotweed is nowhere to be seen. ◻

USEFUL INFORMATION

Follow Tony Skovsende on Instagram **@den_naturlige_have**



Pots of aromatic *Thymus* ‘Lemon Variegated’ and *Thymus pulegioides* ‘Foxley’ line the decking area where the family can eat outside in summer. These container plants are the only ones in the garden that are watered.

IN BRIEF

Name Perch Hill Farm.
What Private garden forming the basis of Sarah Raven's business.
Where East Sussex.
Size Approximately one-and-three-quarter acres.
Soil Slightly acidic, heavy Wealden clay, much improved over the years.
Climate Continental with predominantly hot, dry summers, and intermittently hard winters.
Hardiness zone USDA 8.

Sarah is often to be found wandering around the garden at first light accompanied by the family's dogs, Dusty, Curly and Pebbles. At this time of year, the dahlia trial beds are her particular focus, as she tracks the performance of scores of different cultivars, including some that she has bred herself.

Golden years

Sarah Raven's abundant East Sussex cutting garden grew from a desire to pick a few blooms for the house; three decades later Perch Hill Farm is home to a thriving garden where Sarah trials many plants for her nursery

WORDS JODIE JONES PHOTOGRAPHS JONATHAN BUCKLEY

Thirty years ago, Sarah Raven sold her semi-detached house in west London and bought a run-down farm in East Sussex with her husband Adam Nicolson. “It was the classic scenario – we had a baby, we were fed up with city life, and we wanted more space for our family.”

Since Adam’s father was living at nearby Sissinghurst, where his grandmother Vita Sackville-West made her legendary garden, it was natural for them to house-hunt in this rather out-of-the-way patch of southeast England. “We were both drawn to the unspoilt, medieval landscape, and when we arrived at Perch Hill in May 1994, the woods were gloriously full of bluebells, but, frankly, it was a pretty unprepossessing site. The farmer who owned it before us had sold the tiles off the barn roof and replaced them with asbestos, the central yard was rutted concrete, the oast house had lost its cowl, and there was scarcely a hint of a garden.”

Shortly after they moved in, family friend Christopher Lloyd came to visit them from his home at Great Dixter. “He took one look at the soil, felt the wind, and told me that if I wanted to make a garden I had better move!”

Instead, Sarah decided to get stuck in. “I knew bugger all about gardening at that time. I just wanted some flowers I could pick for the house, so I started work on a plot close to the kitchen, where I would be on hand if the family needed me. It was full of blackthorn and rubbish, and was far too exposed, but I was ignorant enough not to let any of that put me off.” She employed a man from the village to break up the ground with his mini digger, then got down on her hands and knees to set an edging of bricks into soft mortar and rotavated the newly created beds herself. “At that stage I was working as a junior doctor, but I had done a bit of commercial floristry in London and I really wanted a garden full of colour.”

That first cutting garden was not an overnight success. “To start off with, I just chose any old tulip I liked the look of, without even considering flowering times, but I am a nerd at heart, so I soon developed a rather more scientific approach. I chose six annuals from the catalogues, and got six perennials from my parents’ garden, and planted each in a metre-square patch. Then I drew up a chart and recorded the length of time from planting to harvest, any problems with pest and disease, how many weeks or months I could pick from it, how many buckets of flowers that produced, and how long they lasted in a vase.”

Ammi majus and ‘Purity’ cosmos were her first clear winners, and explaining the selection process at a wedding party shortly afterwards led Sarah to write her first book, *The Cutting Garden*, when one of the other guests turned out to be a publisher.

“I made a second cutting garden on the other side of the driveway, set apart from the house, simply because I had dug soil profile pits all over the place and that patch had the greatest depth of topsoil. There really never was any sort of masterplan here.” ▷

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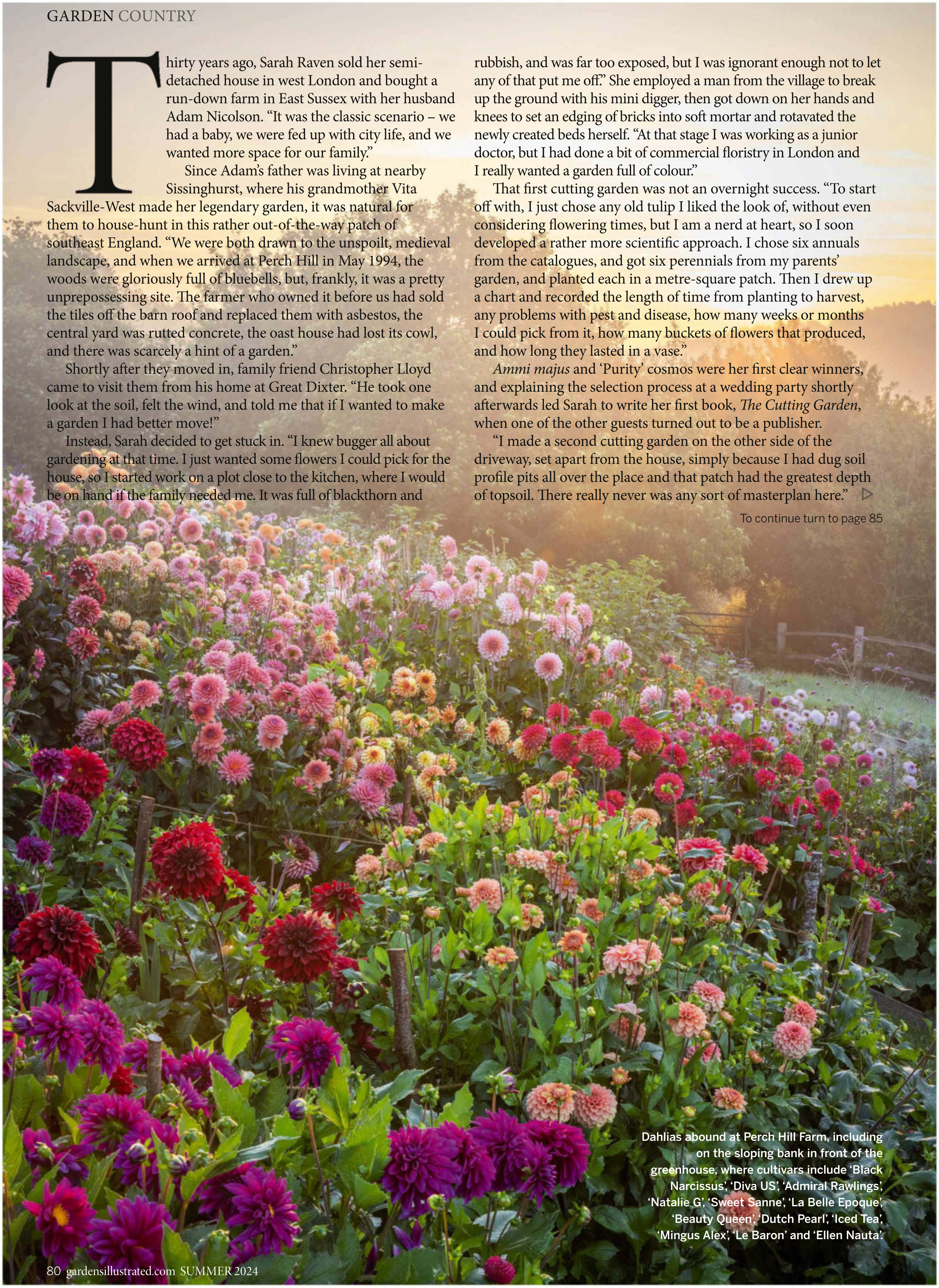
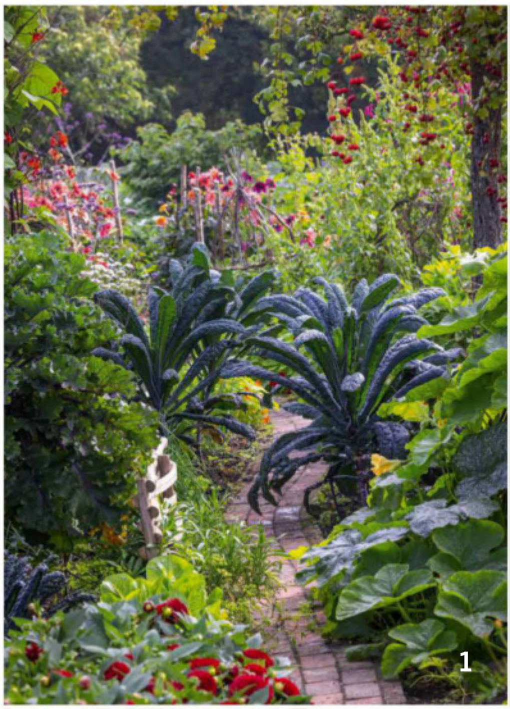


Dahlias abound at Perch Hill Farm, including on the sloping bank in front of the greenhouse, where cultivars include ‘Black Narcissus’, ‘Diva US’, ‘Admiral Rawlings’, ‘Natalie G’, ‘Sweet Sanne’, ‘La Belle Epoque’, ‘Beauty Queen’, ‘Dutch Pearl’, ‘Iced Tea’, ‘Mingus Alex’, ‘Le Baron’ and ‘Ellen Nauta’.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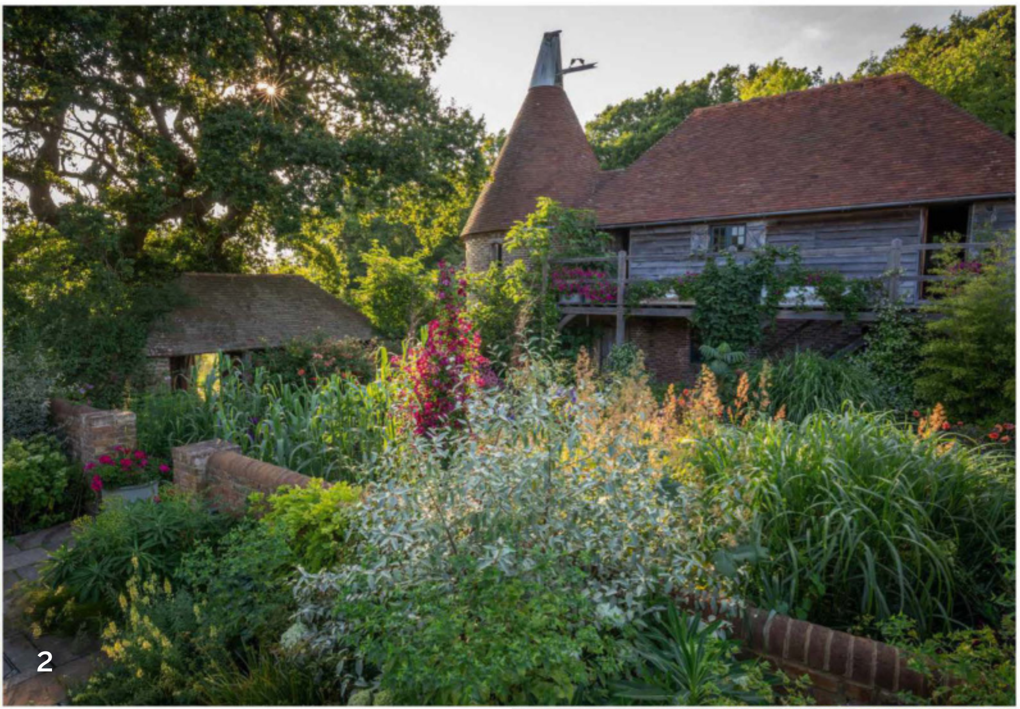
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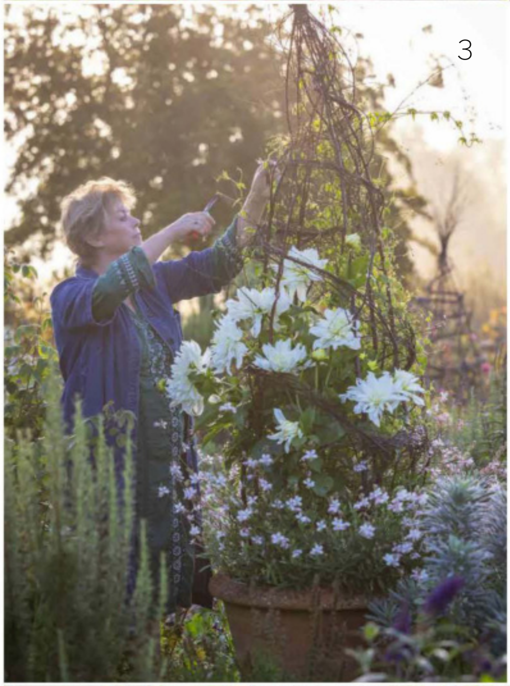
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1 The Vegetable Garden reflects Sarah's passion for colour, with fountains of kale and a carpet of red kuri squash growing alongside marigolds and dahlias.

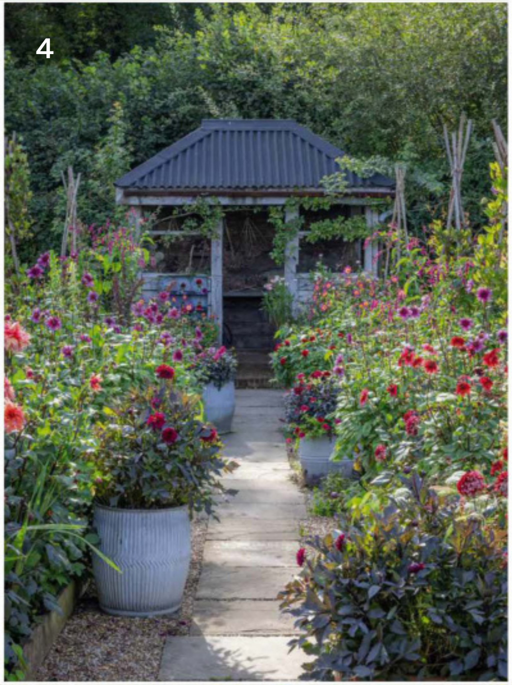
2 A golden haze of macleaya and a striking pillar of claret-red *Clematis* 'Madame Julia Correvon' give the Oast Garden an air of jungle-like exuberance.

3 Deadheading in one of the pot displays, this one a striking combination of *Dahlia* 'Gitts Perfection' and climbing *Cardiospermum halicacabum* rising out of a froth of *Oenothera lindheimeri* 'Flamingo Snow'.

4 At one end of the Cutting Garden, the shed, which featured in Sarah's first RHS Chelsea Flower Show garden, now serves as an attractive focal point and a convenient place to hide bits of practical gardening kit.

5 The Dutch Yard, filled with an enormous collection of oversized pots. These are replanted regularly but at this time of year are filled with yet more dahlias, as well as fuchsias, petunias and scrambling *Ipomoea lobata*.

6 Pinks and purples predominate in the Rose Garden, from the saturated shades of the gallica rose 'Tuscany Superb' to pale 'Marchesa Boccella', beautifully set off by spires of purple toadflax and a haze of bronze fennel.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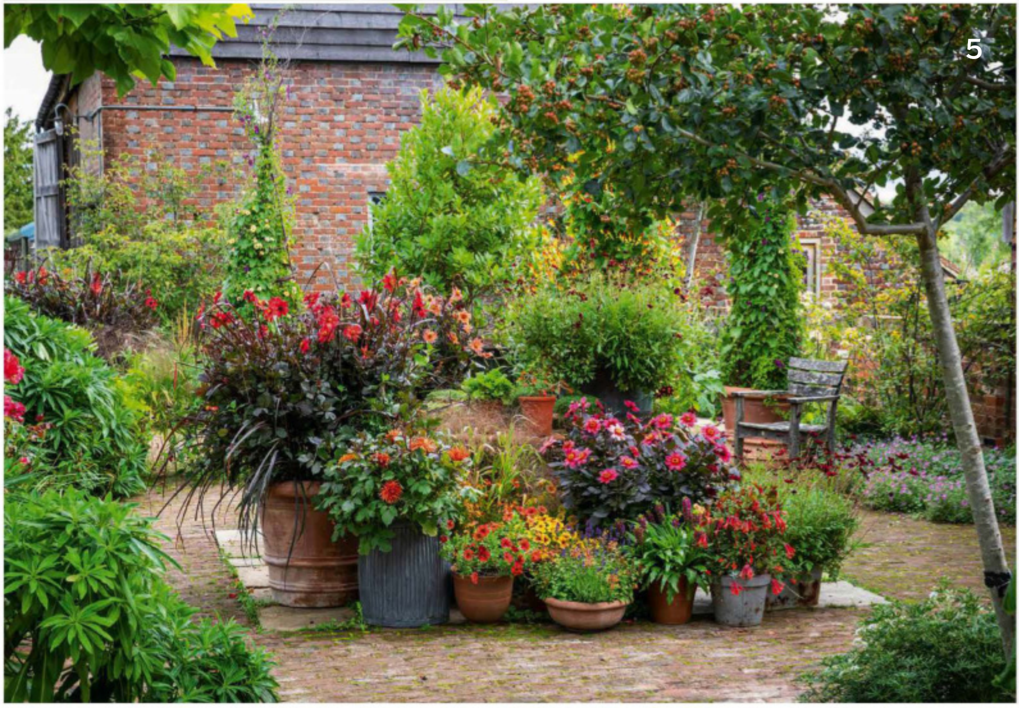
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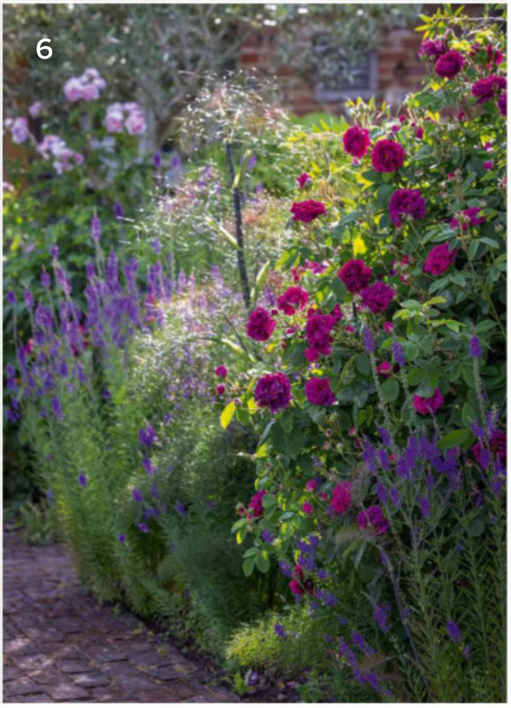
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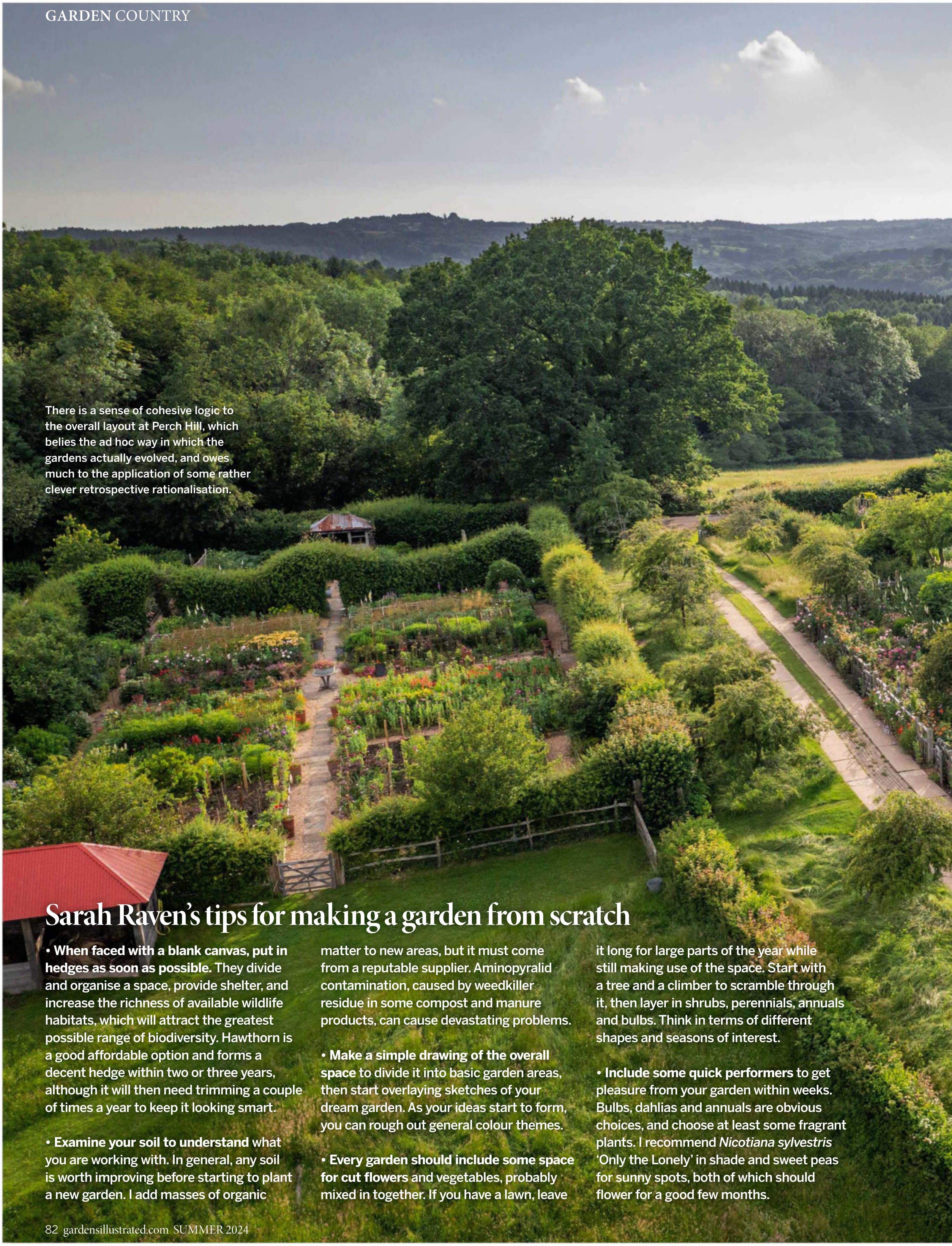


There is a sense of cohesive logic to the overall layout at Perch Hill, which belies the ad hoc way in which the gardens actually evolved, and owes much to the application of some rather clever retrospective rationalisation.

Sarah Raven's tips for making a garden from scratch

- **When faced with a blank canvas, put in hedges as soon as possible.** They divide and organise a space, provide shelter, and increase the richness of available wildlife habitats, which will attract the greatest possible range of biodiversity. Hawthorn is a good affordable option and forms a decent hedge within two or three years, although it will then need trimming a couple of times a year to keep it looking smart.

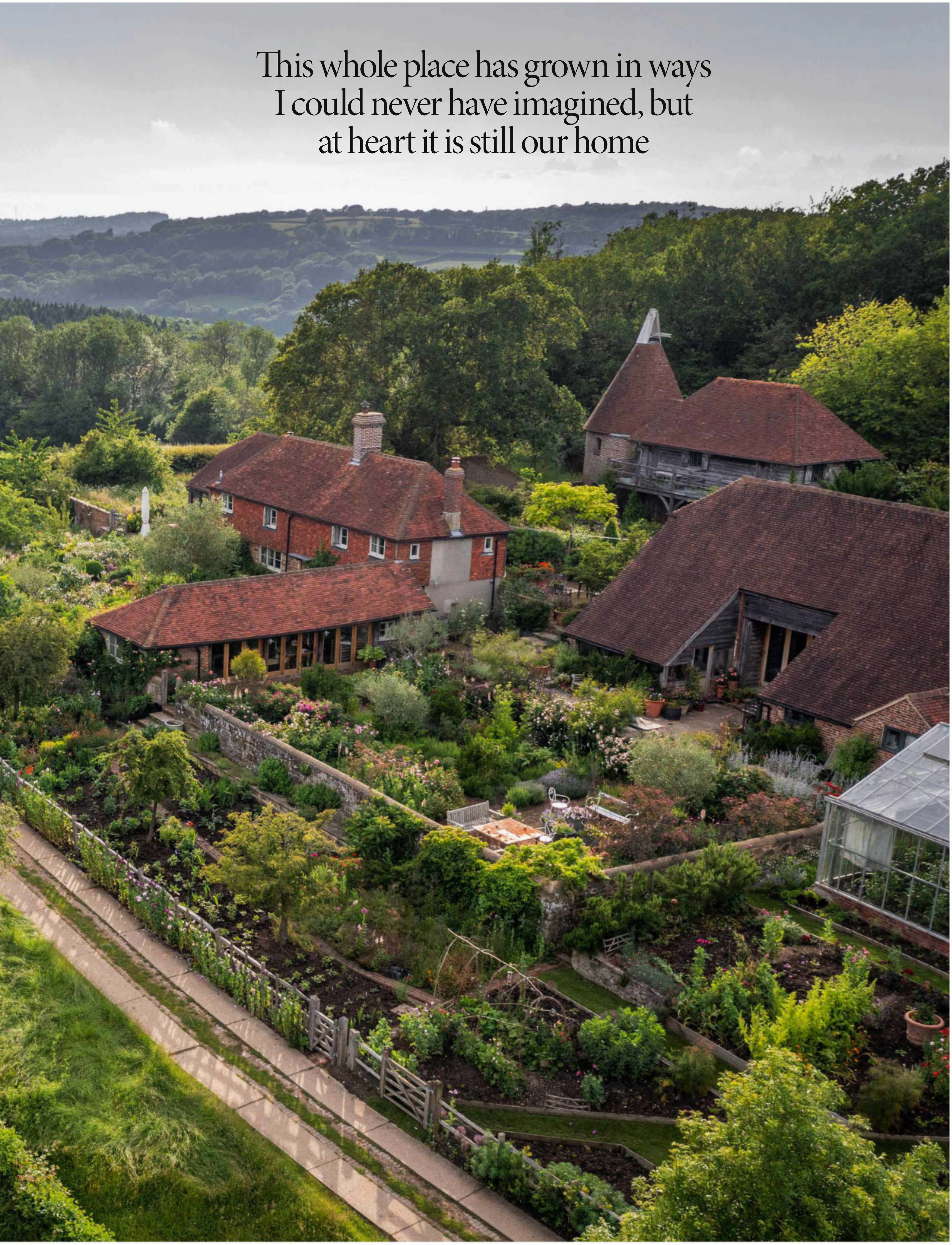
- **Examine your soil to understand** what you are working with. In general, any soil is worth improving before starting to plant a new garden. I add masses of organic matter to new areas, but it must come from a reputable supplier. Aminopyralid contamination, caused by weedkiller residue in some compost and manure products, can cause devastating problems.

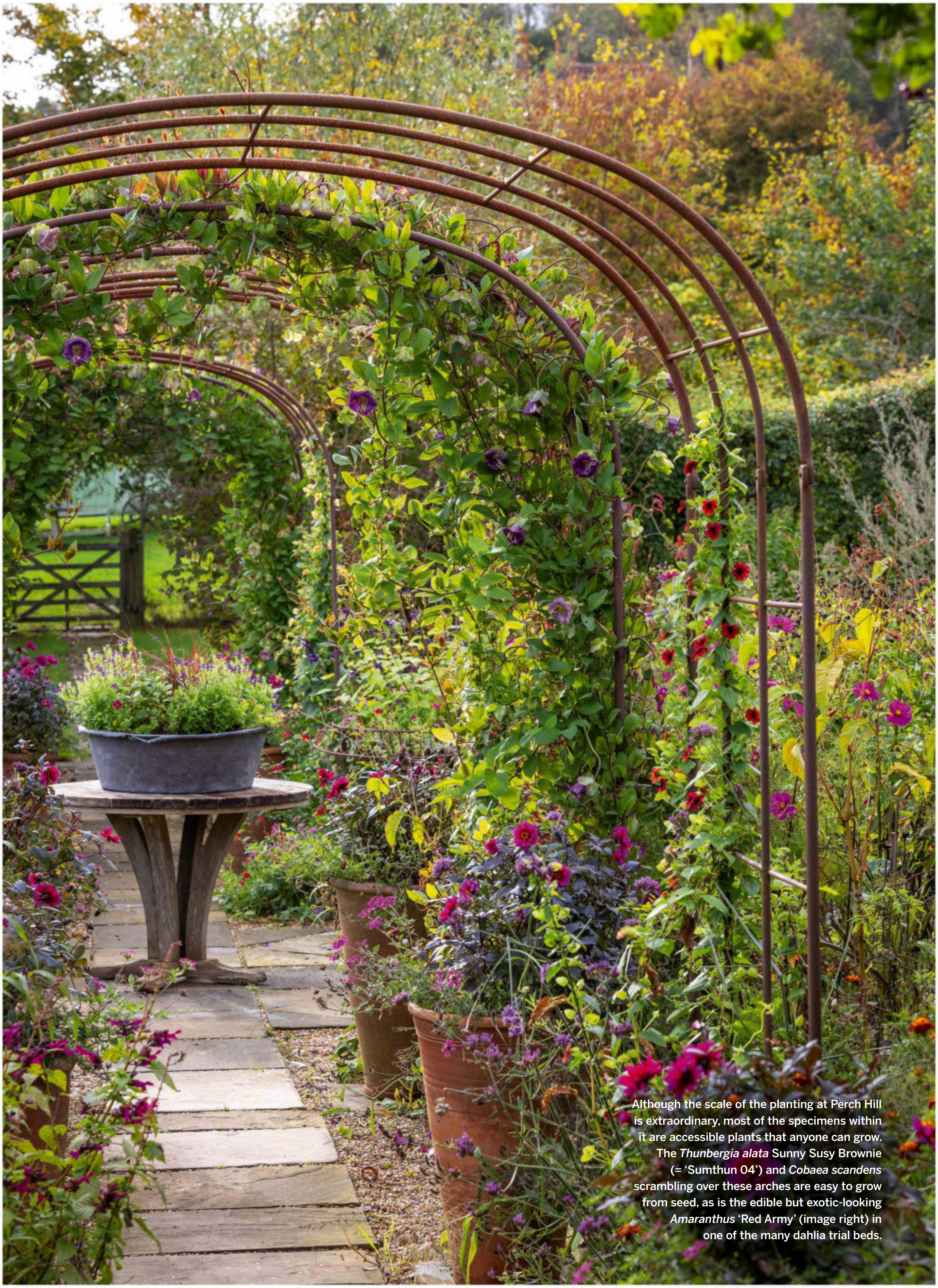
- **Make a simple drawing of the overall space** to divide it into basic garden areas, then start overlaying sketches of your dream garden. As your ideas start to form, you can rough out general colour themes.

- **Every garden should include some space for cut flowers** and vegetables, probably mixed in together. If you have a lawn, leave it long for large parts of the year while still making use of the space. Start with a tree and a climber to scramble through it, then layer in shrubs, perennials, annuals and bulbs. Think in terms of different shapes and seasons of interest.

- **Include some quick performers** to get pleasure from your garden within weeks. Bulbs, dahlias and annuals are obvious choices, and choose at least some fragrant plants. I recommend *Nicotiana sylvestris* 'Only the Lonely' in shade and sweet peas for sunny spots, both of which should flower for a good few months.

This whole place has grown in ways I could never have imagined, but at heart it is still our home





Although the scale of the planting at Perch Hill is extraordinary, most of the specimens within it are accessible plants that anyone can grow. The *Thunbergia alata* Sunny Susy Brownie (= 'Sumthun 04') and *Cobaea scandens* scrambling over these arches are easy to grow from seed, as is the edible but exotic-looking *Amaranthus* 'Red Army' (image right) in one of the many dahlia trial beds.

▷ Like many farmsteads, Perch Hill is made up of a motley selection of barns and outbuildings clustered around a modest house, and Sarah continued to tuck gardens in around them wherever she could, as and when she had the funds to do so. In the Farmhouse Garden, there is a wall that she was able to rebuild thanks to a short-notice invitation to stand in for her friend, the horticulturist Monty Don, when events forced him to withdraw from a lecture tour. “By complete chance, the fee was exactly the same as the quote I had received for the stonework,” she says.

In the richly colourful Oast Garden, which is now probably the most well-known part of Perch Hill, Sarah’s original vision was of a Mediterranean mixture of lavender, cistus and rosemary. “I knew the ground was heavy, so we worked ten tonnes of sharp sand and ten tonnes of organic farmyard manure into the topsoil. It was a ridiculous thing to do on clay, and the lavenders still sulked, but roses and dahlias absolutely loved it, so I took out the Mediterranean species and started making more sensible plant choices.”

Strong colours, bold foliage and rich scents now fill this gently sunken garden and Sarah has steadily refined the plant palette so that she has flowers here from early spring through to at least the end of October. “The dahlias are fantastic. In the early days I started by taking cuttings from Christo’s Dixter dahlias, then experimented with everything I could get my hands on and now I am breeding new cultivars of my own, which I absolutely love doing.”

Growing delicious, healthy produce is another passion, and she has tucked edible plants into various parts of the wider garden, including a dedicated herb garden that she created in consultation with grower Jekka McVicar. “We also have a big glasshouse filled with tomatoes, aubergines and cucumbers in the summer, and salads and more herbs in the winter. Originally, we could only afford a polytunnel, which did the job until one night, after a heavy rain storm, a whole section of top soil slipped down the hill, taking half the structure with it.”

The Dutch Yard, created in 2016, was the final jigsaw piece slotted into the heart of the farm. “It’s just outside our front door, but it was always a gloomy mess of gravel and moss. Finally, we bricked it over and filled it with pots, hydrangeas and a mulberry tree and it is now our absolute favourite place to sit. I devised the water feature at one end, but the overall design was done by Adam and our friend Pip Morrison [the renowned garden designer]. In fact, they have done the hard work of linking up and making sense of all the planted spaces I have created. I have absolutely no spatial awareness so it could have been a disaster without them.

“This whole place has grown in ways I could never have imagined in the beginning,” says Sarah. “It has become a business, with a garden school, shop and nursery, books and lectures, but at heart it is still our home, and I would still be out there every morning picking flowers in my nightie, even if all of that had never happened.” □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Perch Hill Farm, Willingford Lane, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5HP. Pre-bookable tickets for garden open days, courses and events are available through the website: **sarahraven.com**

GI
Reader
EVENT

Talking Gardens: Live

Join our special guests Sarah Raven and Nigel Slater for an evening of lively conversation about gardens and gardening at the Garden Museum in London

To celebrate the success of the award-winning *Gardens Illustrated* podcast Talking Gardens, we will be recording a special episode in front of a live audience this September at the Garden Museum. First-time Talking Gardens guest Sarah Raven will join returning guest Nigel Slater, and host and *Gardens Illustrated* editor Stephanie Mahon, to talk about their dream gardens and plants, horticultural influences and inspirations, and insights into their imaginary Edens, as well as anything else that crops up along the way.

Sarah Raven is a gardener and author with an eponymous online garden emporium. As well as hosting the Grow, Cook, Eat podcast, Sarah also runs courses on productive gardening and growing cut flowers from her home of 30 years, Perch Hill in East Sussex (see page 78).

Nigel Slater is a renowned cook and food writer, and a columnist for *Gardens Illustrated* (see page 35). Our most popular podcast guest to date, we have invited Nigel back for this special one-off recording to reconsider his dream garden picks and reveal more about his own small London garden.

EVENT DETAILS

FRIDAY 6 SEPTEMBER 2024
6.30PM

Tickets: £20 full price; £15 for *Gardens Illustrated* Members and Friends of the Garden Museum.

The event is also available online as a livestream with tickets at £15 full price; £10 for *Gardens Illustrated* Members and Friends of the Garden Museum.

TO BOOK

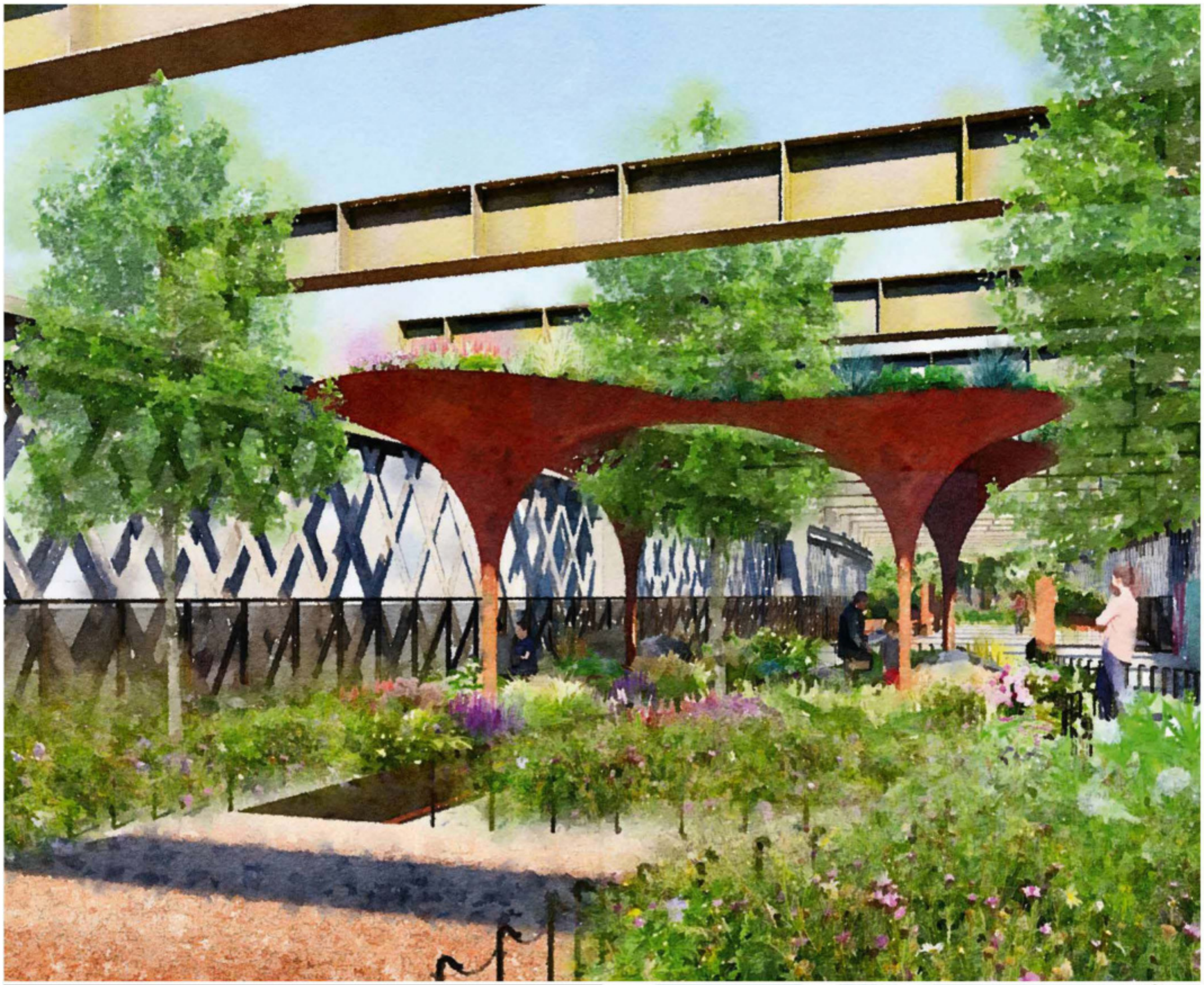
To find out more, scan the QR code right with your phone camera or go to **gardensillustrated.com/garden-museum-event**

Please note: This event is being recorded and livestreamed. The audience will be seated at 6.45pm, recording begins at 7pm sharp and late comers will not be admitted.

JONATHAN BUCKLEY, JOHN CAMPBELL

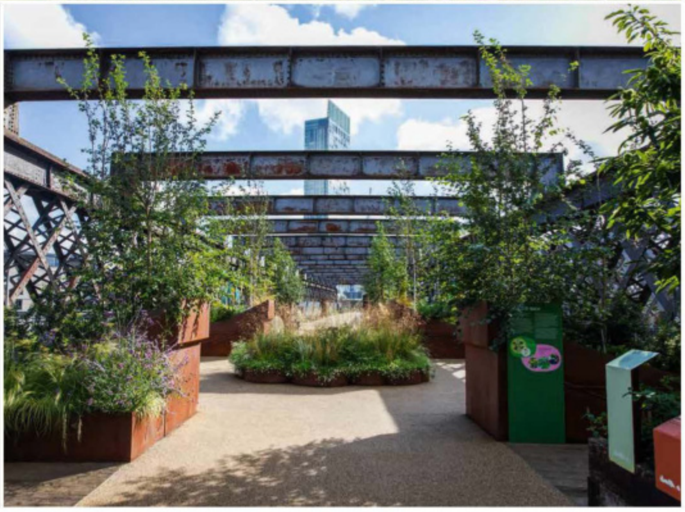
Design

News, easy lawns and sourcebook



Chelsea garden goes sky high

The WaterAid Garden, designed by Tom Massey and Je Ahn, is set to be relocated to the National Trust's new sky park in the heart of Manchester. Having won a Gold medal at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show earlier this year, the garden will find its permanent home at the Castlefield Viaduct (pictured right), where it will continue to educate visitors about sustainable water management. Sponsored by Project Giving Back, the garden will stand at the entrance of the Victorian-era Grade II-listed viaduct (as shown above), which was opened as a linear park by the National Trust in 2022. Tim Wainwright, WaterAid's chief executive said: "It's an exciting move to a great community space, which will enable more people to visit the garden and be inspired to use water sustainably and learn about the crucial role of water."

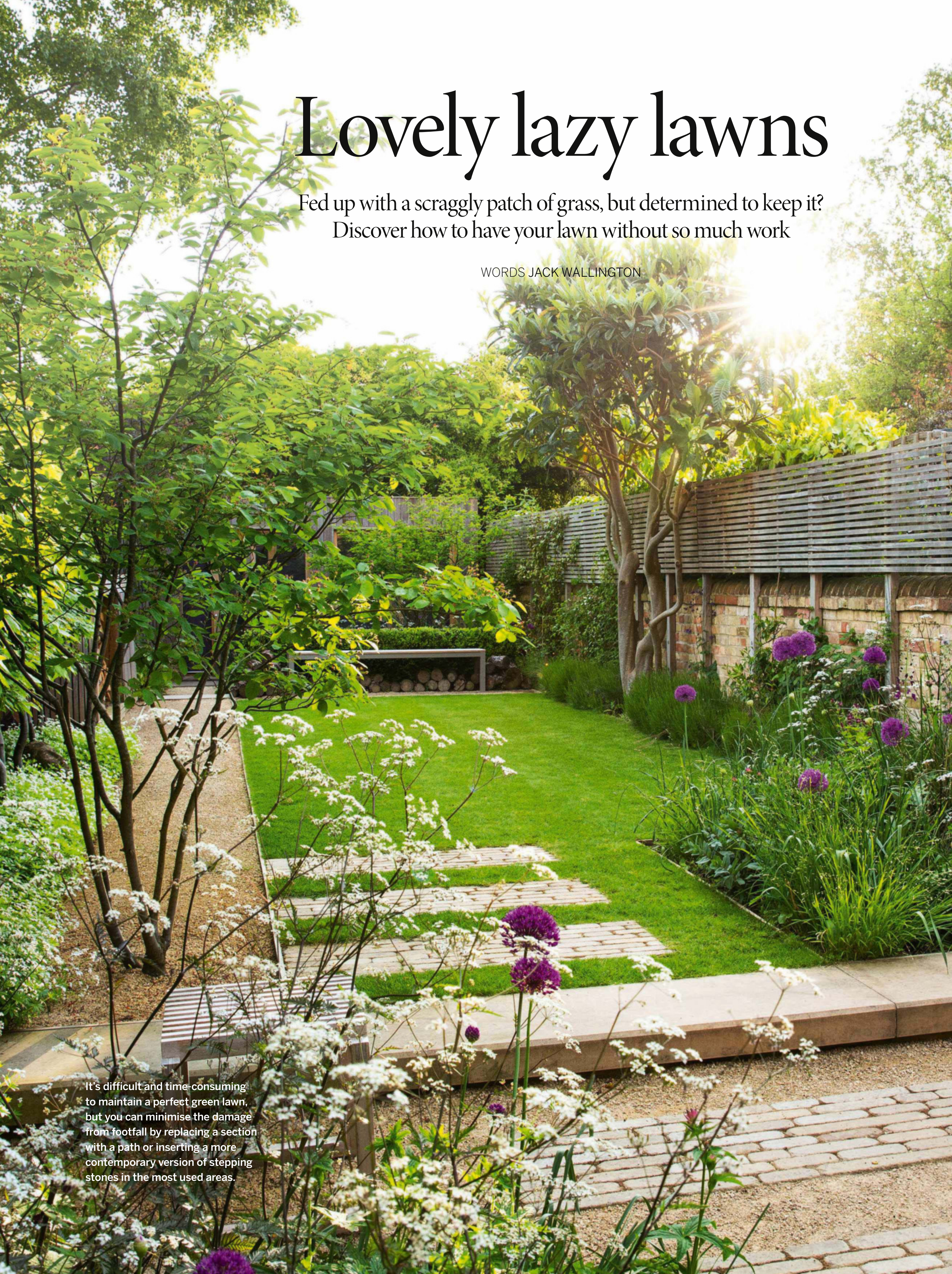


FIONA HANSON / NATIONAL TRUST IMAGES_ANNAPURNA MELLOR.

Lovely lazy lawns

Fed up with a scraggly patch of grass, but determined to keep it? Discover how to have your lawn without so much work

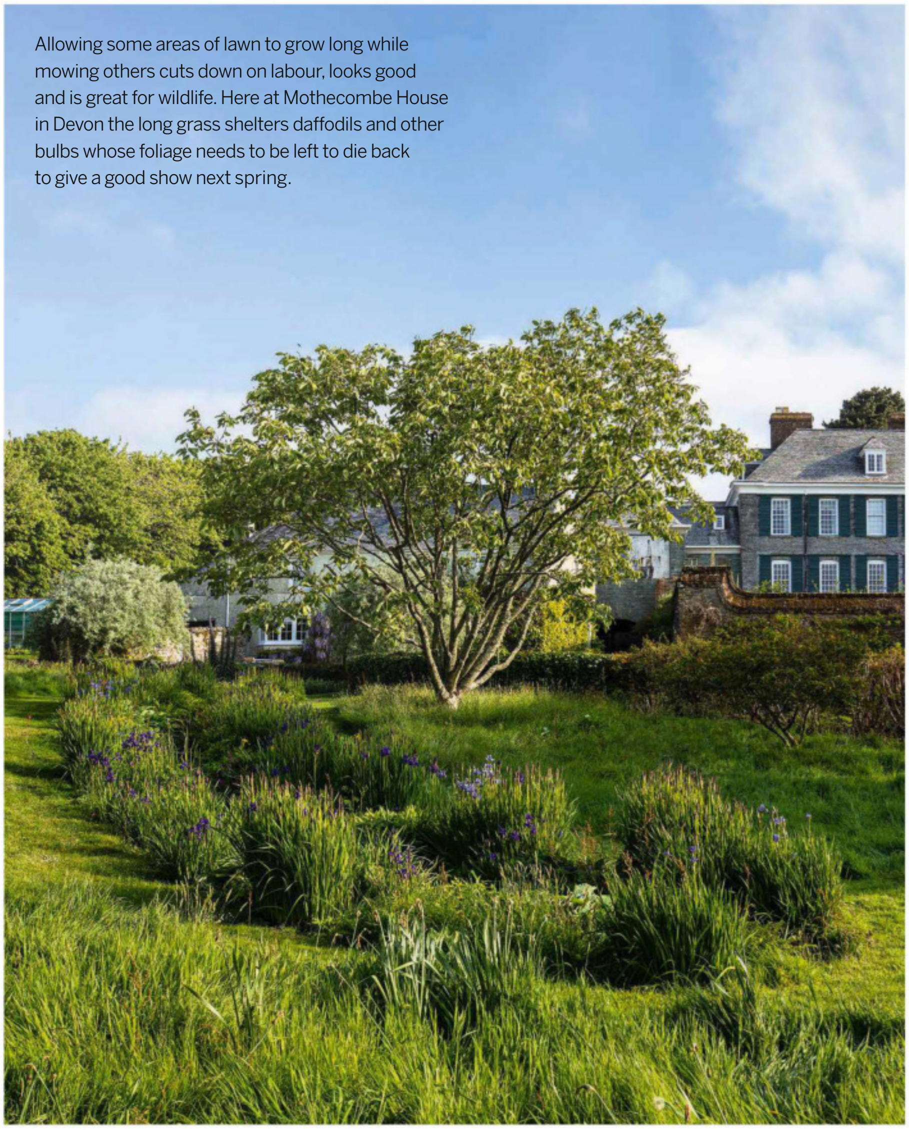
WORDS **JACK WALLINGTON**



It's difficult and time-consuming to maintain a perfect green lawn, but you can minimise the damage from footfall by replacing a section with a path or inserting a more contemporary version of stepping stones in the most used areas.

The lost art of lawn care

Simple advice on keeping your grass looking its best if you're set on having a perfect lawn



Allowing some areas of lawn to grow long while mowing others cuts down on labour, looks good and is great for wildlife. Here at Mothecombe House in Devon the long grass shelters daffodils and other bulbs whose foliage needs to be left to die back to give a good show next spring.

Lawns are the most sustainable usable surface we can make, absorbing carbon, retaining water and sustaining wildlife that thrives in low grassland habitat. And yet, in winter they can become muddy, and, in spring and autumn, soggy. During hot summers they can turn hard and brown. They can be more demanding of time than most garden elements, driving some to plastic grass.

People often ask what they can grow as an alternative to lawn that won't turn into mud from children's play or sustain burn patches from dog wee. But the reality is that few plants can resist being walked on as heavily as the grass family. Grasses evolved on plains with herds of animals trampling and chomping them, with replacement blades then firing up from the base. Billions of years of evolution led to the lawn.

Reducing unused lawn will minimise maintenance; options include turning it into a sort of long-grass meadow area, or just adding more planting. But many of us still want usable lawn areas on which to walk or picnic, as a play area for young children, or simply for the look. So what can we do to make our turf easier to tend, while helping biodiversity, and enabling our children to experience a real lawn with daisies to pick?

Allow lawns to establish

New lawns are particularly vulnerable, whereas mature lawns repair more easily. Established plants are stronger and able to rejuvenate faster, and many lawn grasses will spread via rhizomes. Mature lawns, unlike new ones, will also have a seedbank in the soil. The older the lawn, the better it is at self-repair, because it has a greater seedbank, and creeping species are more likely to spread into worn gaps and bare patches. Lawns from laid turf are more resilient from year two on, and lawns from seed from year three.

Optimise your mix

Every single plant in a garden lives by the rule 'right plant, right place', including lawn grasses. Different mixes exist for various positions and use: sun, shade, ornamental and hard-wearing. If your lawn receives lots of use, opt for ▷

- **Mow regularly.** The most important thing with upkeep of a lawn is to mow regularly in spring and summer. If the grass is short, light can reach every blade, keeping the lawn tight and tough with new growth from the base. Leave it for a few weeks and that's all it takes for the lawn grass to shade itself, forming clumps and killing off small sections, exposing soil that becomes muddy when wet. If you really hate mowing, don't despair: robot mowers really do work, and maintenance gardeners are worth investigating.

- **Mowing with a mulching blade** chops grass into tiny bits which can be left to rot down, feeding the soil and removing the need for fertiliser.

- **Aerate and scarify.** If your lawn is heavily used, aerate it each year in spring or autumn. This simply means poking holes into it with a garden fork or specialist tool to stop the soil compacting. You may also need to scarify or rake out the thatch (the name given to dead grass and mossy material in lawns) to prevent it shading new grass growth. There are mechanised tools available for doing both of these tasks.

- **Repair any bare patches.** If a patch does appear, oversow by scattering seed, using the same mix as the rest of the lawn, in spring or autumn, and protect that spot for a few months until the grass has fully grown. For a faster fix, a roll of new turf can be cut up and laid into gaps in spring, as long as you prepare the soil and then keep the turf well watered. You might find it easier to cut out a bigger area to lay a larger piece of turf.

RACHEL WARNE (DESIGN BY ANGUS THOMPSON), CLAIRE TAKACS

▷ heavy-duty grass intended for sports pitches. Real grass can tolerate wear from rugby teams scrapping it out, so it can also withstand energetic toddlers. Urban lawns can be fairly shaded by surrounding fences or buildings, so they will benefit from a shade mix. There are also specialist grass seed companies online that can tailor a seed mix to your garden, and most offer turf for different conditions.

Encourage wildflower ‘thugs’

Many of the plants we are told are bad for lawns are actually among the best for toughening them up. Dandelions, achillea, self-heal, plantain, buttercup and daisies are all able to withstand being trodden on and their roots help bind the soil. They are all more drought resistant than lawn grass, remaining green in dry weather when grass may temporarily die back. Moss in shady lawns is also a good thing, making an area green in spots where grass can’t grow. If you take part in No Mow May and then cut your grass back to lawn, be aware that it will look awful for a month or so, and could lead to dead patches that need repairing as the clump-forming grasses shade others out. If you’d like a meadow area, the best solution is to choose a permanent spot and then stick with it, maintaining it for just that purpose. For instance, one half of the area could remain a lawn, while the other half becomes permanent meadow.

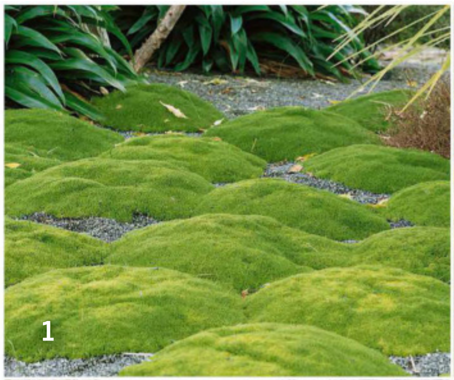
Avoid in wet weather

Lawns are at their most vulnerable when waterlogged, as that is when soggy soil under the grass can squash or slip, tearing up the roots. If you can avoid using the lawn during the wettest weeks, it will ensure the grass is strong for the rest of the year. The muddiest patches are often caused by repeated use, such as walking to and from a shed or garage. Create a simple path and people are likely to use it in the wetter months, protecting the lawn.

If you want an immaculate rectangle of green for a lawn, the reality is that you won’t be able to use it. Better to accept that a lawn full of use and happy memories is going to have some bare patches, and hopefully plenty of wildflowers. ◻

Interesting alternatives to lawn

If you like the look of an open space from a lawn, but want a flat, low, green swathe of groundcover that requires less maintenance, try an alternative to grass. Any low-growing plant that spreads across the ground in a tight carpet will give you openness without the need to mow. They must be evergreen to prevent interlopers getting a look in during winter. Good candidates for small areas include London pride (*Saxifraga* x *urbium*), sedums, oregano, sea thrift (*Armeria*) and other alpines. Please note that none of these plants can withstand being constantly walked on; they are purely ornamental.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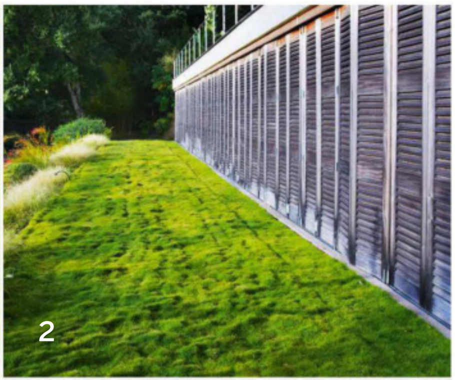
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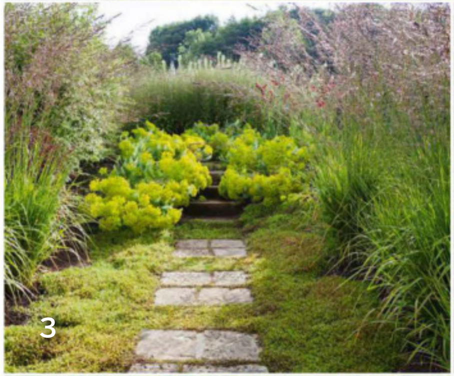
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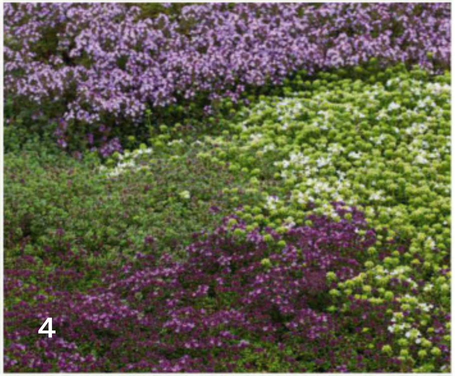
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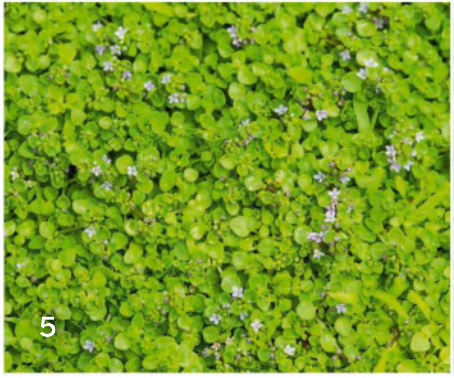
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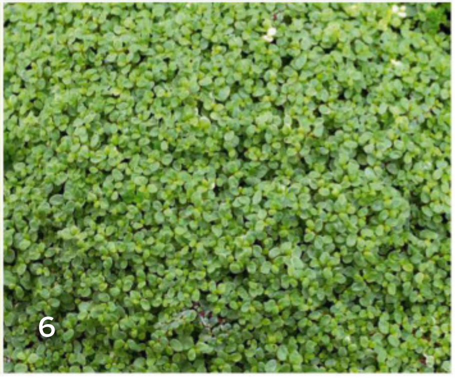
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1 *Scleranthus biflorus* An evergreen alpine plant from Australia that creates moss-like mounds and is hardy through most of the UK. Can cope with some light foot traffic. Prefers well-drained soil in full sun.

2 *Zoysia matrella* Generally sold as *Zoysia tenuifolia*, this vigorous east Asian perennial grass is used increasingly in dry, hot places such as Greece and southern Italy to create a drought-tolerant, uneven carpet of tufty green. Not fully hardy but may cope with temperatures down to -4ºC – however its leaves do turn yellow in the cold. In milder climates it stays green year-round. Can cope with some shade and light footfall.

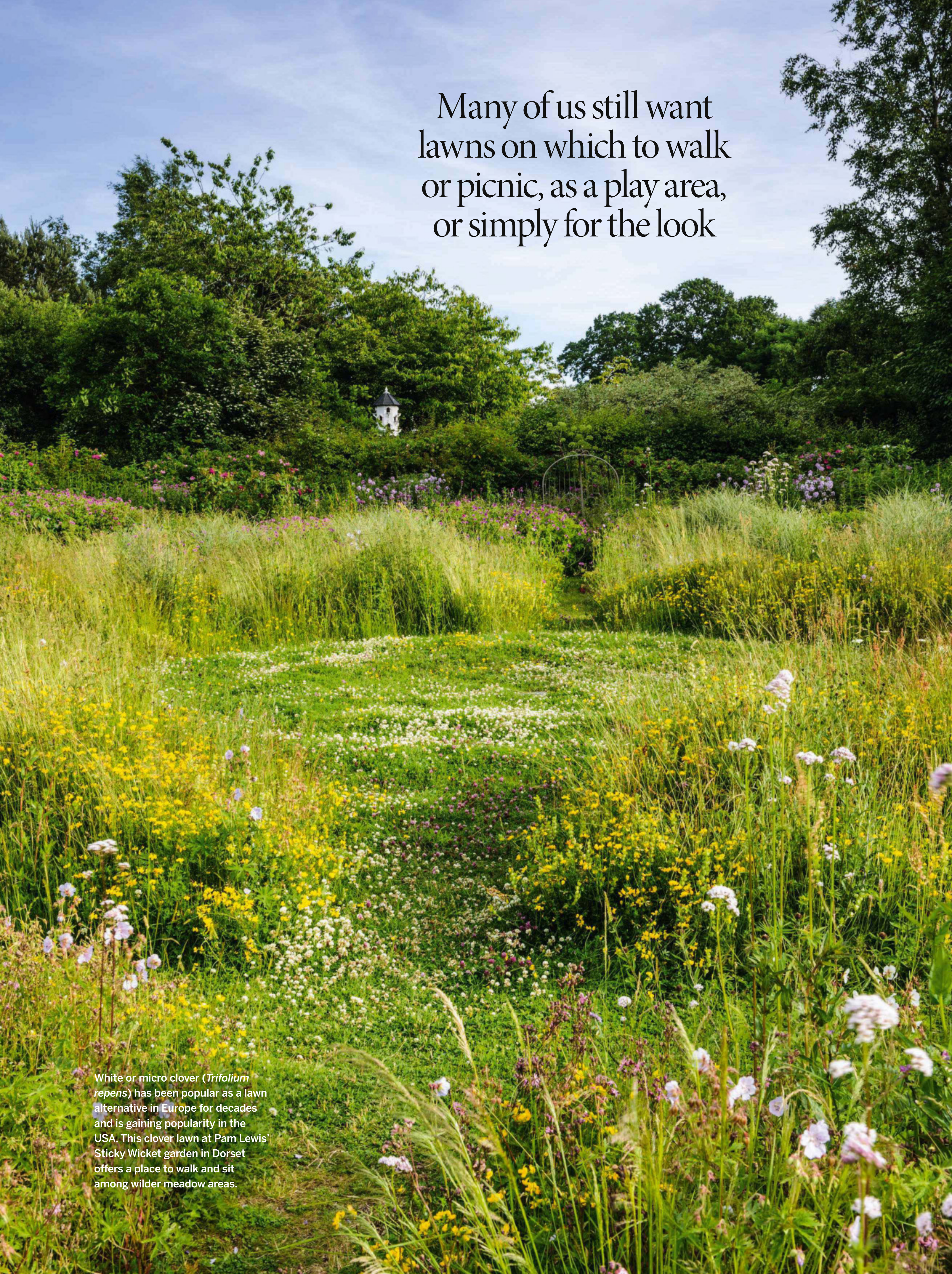
3 *Leptinella squalida* A hardy, ground-hugging evergreen perennial with tiny, fern-like leaves of green and sometimes bronze, and yellow button-like flowers in summer. It can cope with light foot traffic but is not drought tolerant and prefers a moist, well-drained soil in full sun or part shade.

4 Creeping thymes Thymes, such as white-flowered *Thymus serpyllum* ‘Snowdrift’ and mauve-coloured *Thymus pseudolanuginosus* are popular for thyme lawns, which have wonderful fragrance and often colourful flowers too. They generally prefer drier conditions once established but won’t tolerate much foot traffic.

5 *Mentha requienii* Also known as Corsican mint, this is a mat-forming, peppermint-scented, small-leaved, evergreen species of mint that likes moist soil and shade. Like other mints, it can spread in ideal conditions but won’t tolerate much footfall.

6 *Soleirolia soleirolii* Better known as mind-your-own-business, this is a good choice for a green cloaking groundcover in damp shade conditions where grass would struggle to grow. Evergreen and hardy except in harsh winters, it has a reputation for spreading.

NOVA PHOTO GRAPHIK, CLIVE NICHOLS - DESIGNER: JEAN-LAURENT FELIZIA, FRANCE, FIONA McLEOD, JO WHITWORTH, MATTEO CARASSALE, ERNIE JANES / ALL GAP PHOTOS; JASON INGRAM



> Many of us still want lawns on which to walk or picnic, as a play area, or simply for the look

White or micro clover (*Trifolium repens*) has been popular as a lawn alternative in Europe for decades and is gaining popularity in the USA. This clover lawn at Pam Lewis' Sticky Wicket garden in Dorset offers a place to walk and sit among wilder meadow areas.

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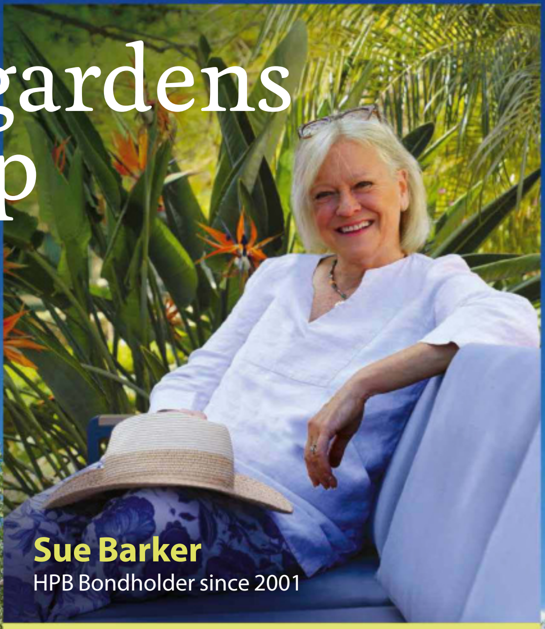

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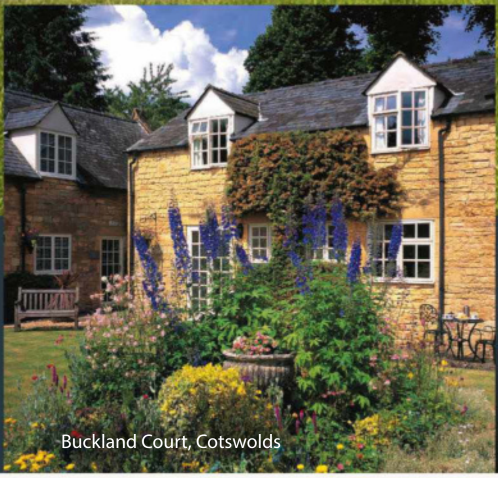

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Five beautiful gardens you can visit on an Ambassador Cruise Line holiday

Planning a cruise this year? Be inspired to add a trip to a world-renowned garden to your port itinerary

If you'd like to combine your cruise holiday with seeing some of the world's best gardens, the good news is that many of the world's most beautiful gardens are easily accessible from Ambassador cruise ports. From subtropical delights in Madeira to a French garden that's instantly recognisable, be inspired to plan a flower-filled trip with this guide.

Monet's House & Gardens, Giverny, France

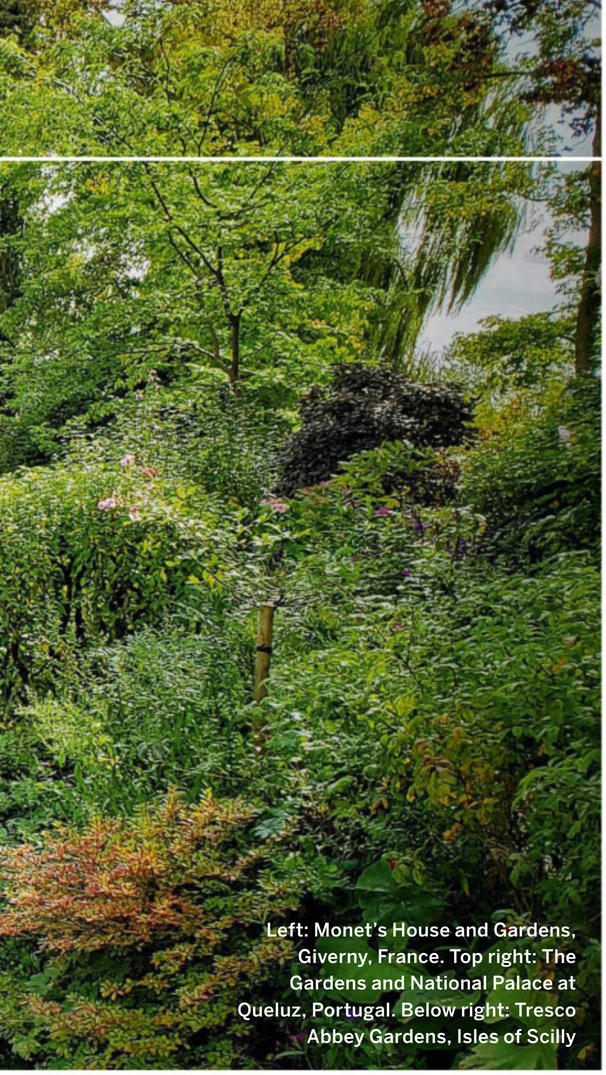
The garden of the French Impressionist Claude Monet was immortalised in paint and canvas numerous times by the artist. Monet moved to Giverny in 1883 and over four decades transformed the garden into the masterpiece it is today. As well as inspiring many of his artworks and providing him with the 'en plein air' painting locations he loved, the garden is itself a magnificent piece of art.

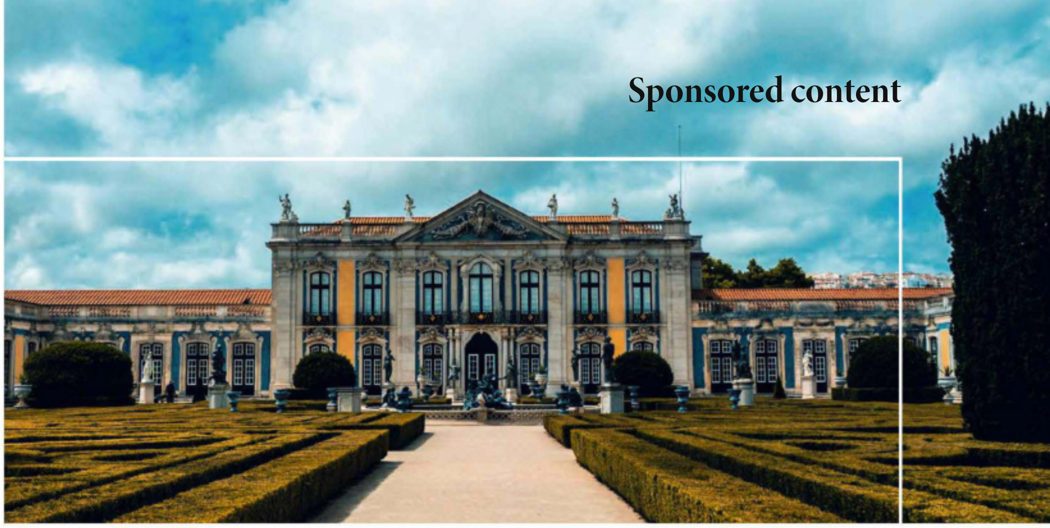
To plan a visit to Giverny, choose a cruise that docks at Le Havre, Honfleur or Rouen between April and October.

Keukenhof, Lisse, the Netherlands

Easily accessible from the ports of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and IJmuiden, the Keukenhof in Lisse is on many gardeners' must-visit list. World-famous for its dazzling displays of spring flowers – there are more than 7 million spring-flowering bulbs – Keukenhof is a wonderful place to see hyacinths, freesias, chrysanthemums and, of course, tulips.

The park is divided into garden areas which, in 2024, included the beach garden, where Ibiza meets the Netherlands; the Mediterranean





Left: Monet's House and Gardens, Giverny, France. Top right: The Gardens and National Palace at Queluz, Portugal. Below right: Tresco Abbey Gardens, Isles of Scilly

garden; and the Sound of Spring with its mix of art, music and nature. There are also sculptures and works of art placed throughout the park.

Madeira Botanical Garden, Madeira

Madeira's subtropical climate is perfect for a wide variety of flowers, shrubs and trees, and at the Madeira Botanical Garden in Funchal you can explore more than 3,000 species of plants. You'll find an arboretum, a succulent garden and topiary, plus a section dedicated to endemic plants from the Madeira archipelago.

Located on the slopes overlooking Funchal, with panoramic views of the Atlantic, you can also travel there by cable car to experience a peaceful retreat above the bustling city, then take the cable car back to the suburb of Monte and pick up the traditional wicker toboggan to return to the ship.

Tresco Abbey Gardens, Isles of Scilly

Another subtropical garden that can be visited on a cruise is Tresco Abbey Gardens. Described on its website as 'a perennial Kew without the glass', it's home to 2,000 species from the subtropics and southern hemisphere – all just 28 miles off the Cornish coast!

Plants on display include echiums, strelitzias and heliconias. And among the plants you may also be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of a red squirrel or golden pheasant. Likened to visiting the Caribbean, these stunning gardens are a short boat ride over to Tresco from a cruise stop in St Mary's.

The Gardens and National Palace at Queluz, Portugal

The residence of the Portuguese royal family until the 1800s, the Gardens and National Palace at Queluz have been carefully restored and include a topiary parterre, a grotto with an artificial waterfall, formal terraces and walkways with sculptures, and a Flemish-inspired grand canal. And as you'd expect from a Portuguese construction, there are lots of beautiful azulejos – ceramic tiles – depicting historical scenes.

Add these glorious gardens to your itinerary if you're embarking on a cruise that stops in Lisbon, as they're easily accessible from the capital city.

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REVIEWS.io

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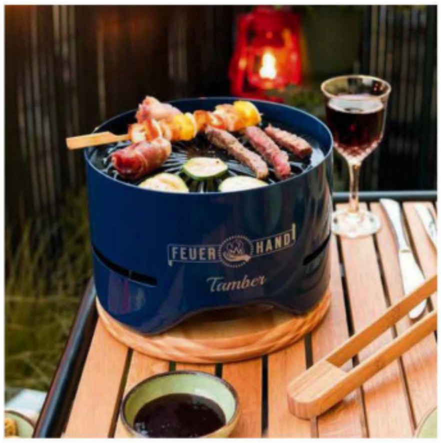
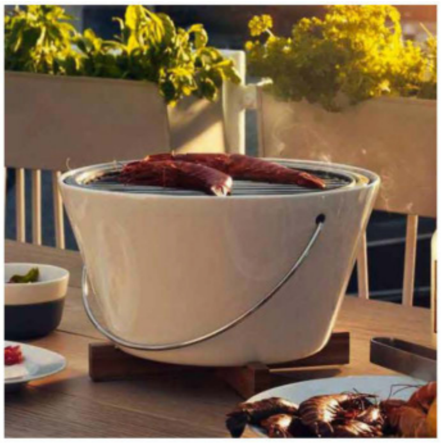
Tabletop grills

Create tasty meals al fresco whatever your size of garden with our pick of mini outdoor grills

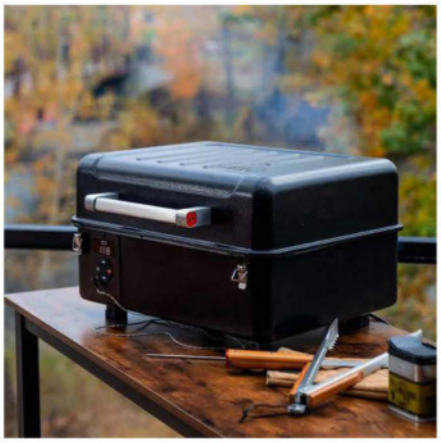
COMPILED BY NIKI GOSS



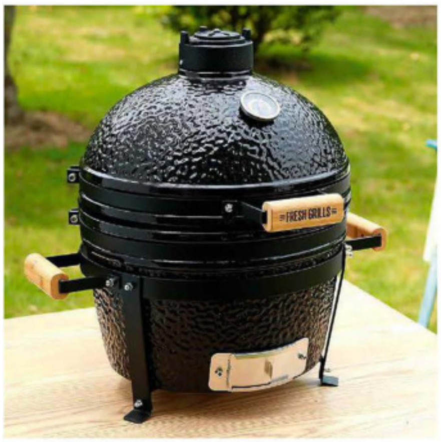
VERSATILE
Feuerhand Tamber Table Top Grill, £89.95, Outdoor Adventurer, 01386 841899, outdooradventurer.co.uk



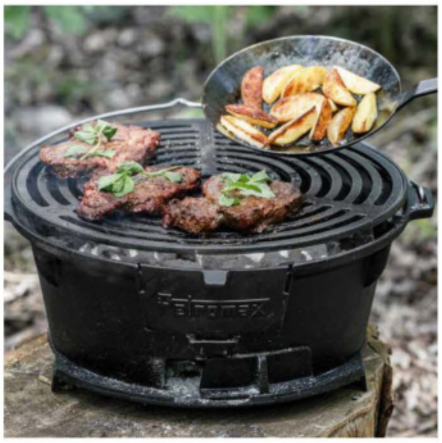
DANISH DESIGN
Eva Solo Table Grill, white, £252.06, Connox, 020 3880 0027, connox.co.uk



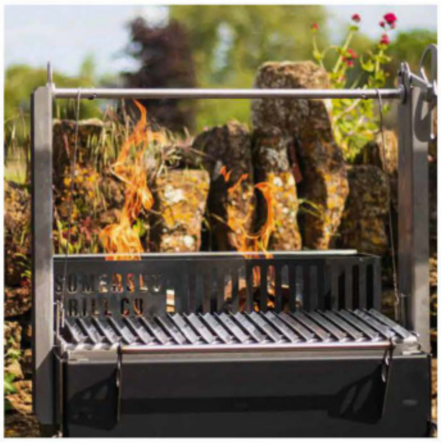
PERFECT FOR CAMPING
Traeger Ranger Portable Wood Pellet Grill Smoker, £549.99, Bell of Northampton, 01604 777504, abell.co.uk



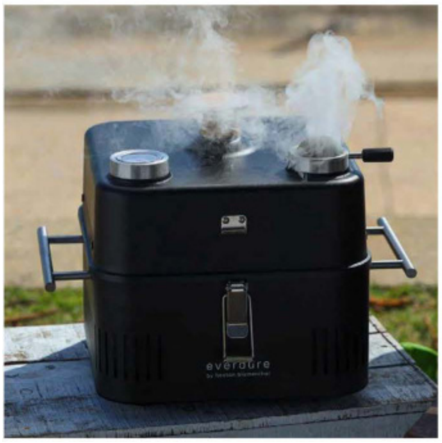
BIG RANGE
Fresh Grills Ceramic BBQ Grill, £399.99, Fresh Grills, freshgrills.co.uk



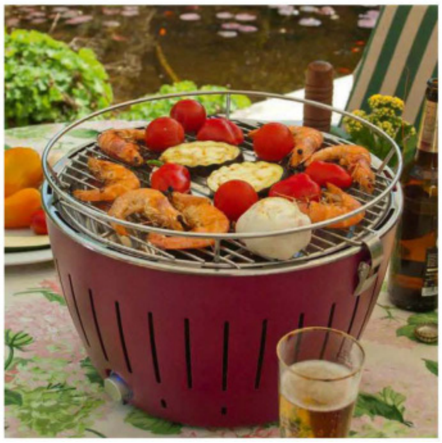
ADJUSTABLE
Petromax Fire Barbecue, £175.95, Berry Useful, berryuseful.co.uk



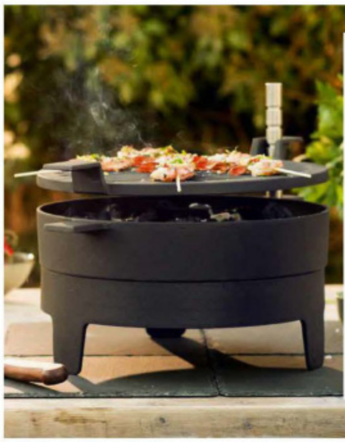
ARGENTINIAN STYLE
Asado Grill, gunmetal, £1,545, Somerset Grill Co, 07376 362283, somersetgrill.com



CHEF'S CHOICE
Everdure Cube 360 Charcoal Portable BBQ, £229, Lakeland, 01539 488100, lakeland.co.uk



SPEEDY START
LotusGrill BBQ, red, £175, Philip Morris & Son, 01432 377089, philipmorrisdirect.co.uk



Find barbecue accessories by scanning this QR code with your phone camera, or visit **gardensillustrated.com/bbqtools**

CAST IRON
Morso Grill 71 Table Outdoor Barbecue, £249, Direct Stoves, 01615 165885, directstoves.com

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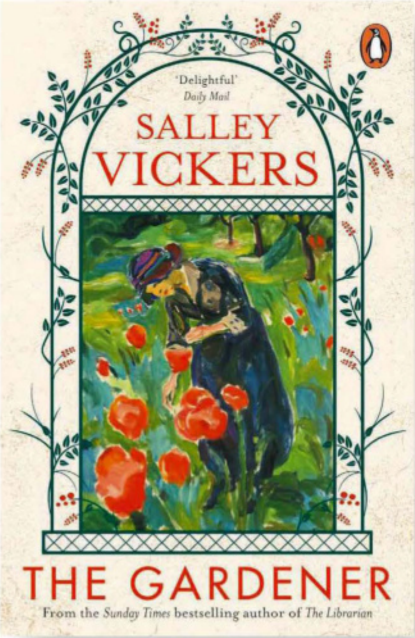
DOWNTOOLS

Top fiction for summer reading, the crossword and the big idea

CAMILLA JORVAD

Fiction for gardeners

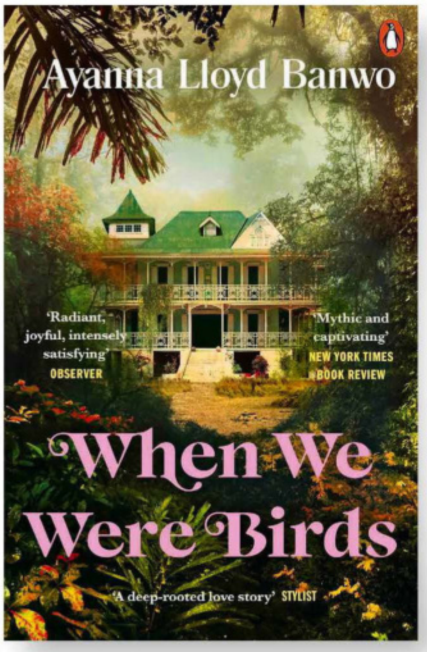
We asked writer Alice Vincent to choose ten works of fiction for gardeners to lose themselves in this summer. Set against a backdrop of landscapes both curated and wild, her picks range from a spell-binding tale of the search for identity on a tropical Caribbean island to an epic 19th-century journey to discover the flora and fauna of far-flung lands…



THE GARDENER
by Salley Vickers

Penguin Books, £9.99
ISBN 978-0241991176

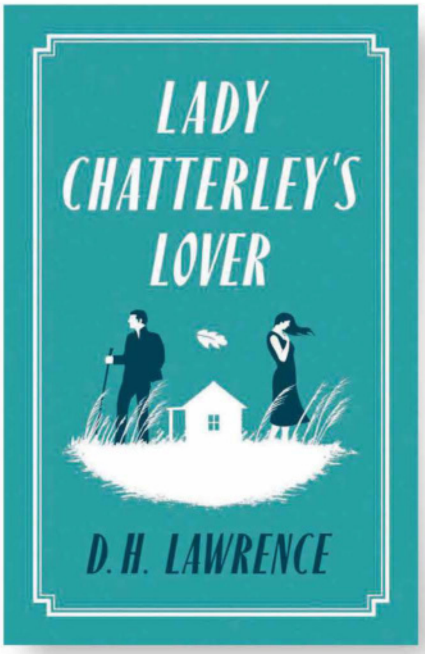
Former Jungian psychotherapist Salley Vickers is a keen gardener and folds the language of gardens and plants alongside her artfully drawn characters. *The Gardener*, her most recent novel, puts the long-neglected garden of a country escape at the heart of the story. In the fictional Shropshire village of Hope Wenlock, heartbroken and bereaved Halcyon Days, a questioning woman in her forties, finds redemption and an unlikely friendship when she tackles a tumbledown cottage and garden she owns with her sister. The sisters bicker and seethe as if they were still children, but as the novel progresses the garden gives them space to gain understanding. The titular gardener is Murat, an Albanian local hired by Halcyon to help with the overgrowth. The histories they uncover give everyone a new sense of common ground.


Ayanna Lloyd Banwo
'Radiant, joyful, intensely satisfying' OBSERVER
'Mythic and captivating' NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW
When We Were Birds
'A deep-rooted love story' STYLIST

WHEN WE WERE BIRDS
by Ayanna Lloyd Banwo

Penguin Books, £9.99
ISBN 978-0241991633

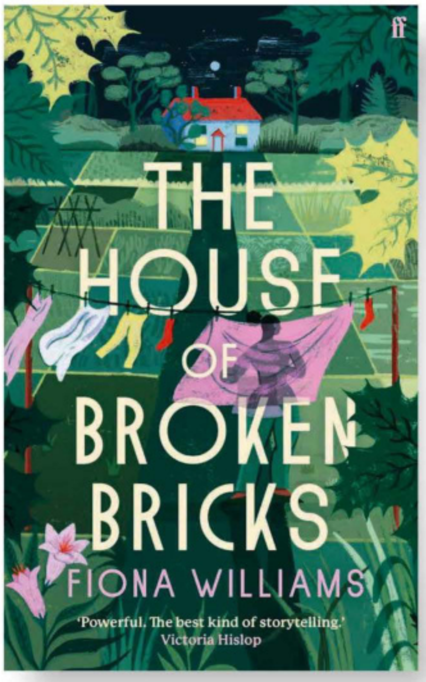
There are, arguably, two green spaces that underpin the remarkable magical realism of Trinidadian author Ayanna Lloyd Banwo's debut: the haunting depth and stillness of the gardens around Morne Marie, the family home of medium Yejide St Bernard, and the lush, tropical growth between the Victorian gravestones of Fidelis, a sprawling cemetery at the heart of the city down below. It is here that Darwin works, making money to fund his mother's medical bills. His role as a gravedigger means he has had to shave off his dreadlocks, going against his faith as a Rastafarian. It is also to Fidelis that Yejide is drawn, lured by spirits she struggles to understand. Between the ghosts of Morne Marie, a former plantation, and the recently buried stories of the cemetery, these two characters form an unlikely connection. The result is a story that is mesmerising in its ability to transplant the reader into the verdancy of Trinidad.



LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER
by DH Lawrence

Alma Classics, £6.99
ISBN 978-1847494085

DH Lawrence's incendiary novel is famous for many things, chief among them its victory at the heart of the 1960 obscenity trial that transformed what publishers were – and were not – allowed to print. Even if you've not read *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the chances are that you'll be aware of the title character Oliver Mellors. So yes, there's a lot of sex in the book – but there's also a lot of garden. Lawrence was a plant person, unusual among authors in having a degree in botany, rather than one of the arts. Flowers crop up across his writing, but few authors would have had the botanical nous to know that, during a clandestine meeting in the middle of a wood, Connie Chatterley and Mellors could indeed have dressed one another's body hair in forget-me-nots – presumably *Myosotis sylvatica*, which is common in the Midlands.

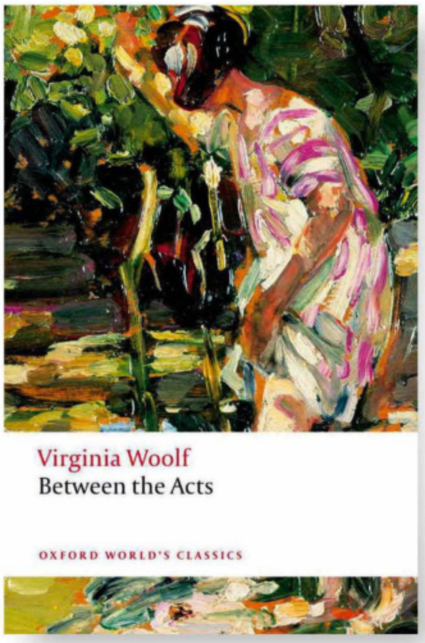

ff
THE HOUSE OF BROKEN BRICKS
FIONA WILLIAMS
'Powerful. The best kind of storytelling.' Victoria Hislop

THE HOUSE OF BROKEN BRICKS
by Fiona Williams

Faber & Faber, £14.99
ISBN 978-0571379552

This eagerly anticipated debut won biological scientist Fiona Williams the Bridport Prize and a coveted publishing deal with Faber. *The House of Broken Bricks* hops between the streets of Peckham, London, and a quiet village in rural Somerset and four separate narratives from a young family with twin boys: one who appears white, the other black. As the family splinters for shocking reasons that take time to unfold, the garden becomes the space where they try to connect, whether through growing, playing, cooking or becoming immersed ever deeper in nature. Williams' knowledge of the natural world is evident in her ability to enliven flora and fauna to the extent that they become their own characters. Identity, love and loss collide in this elegiac portrait of a simple family garden and its ability to offer resilience and strength to the people who tend to it.

> Lawrence was a plant person, unusual among authors in having a degree in botany, rather than one of the arts



BETWEEN THE ACTS
by Virginia Woolf

Oxford University Press, £7.99
ISBN 978-0199536573

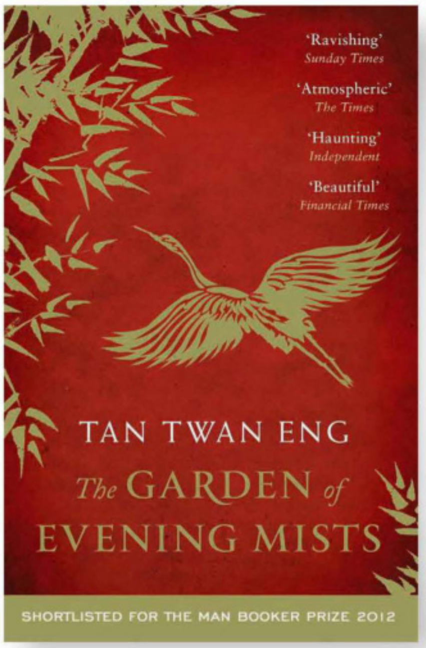
While her 1919 short story *Kew Gardens* may be the work many think of when considering Virginia Woolf's nature writing, or perhaps *To The Lighthouse* with its ever-nostalgic family garden, it is the green space in *Between the Acts* that I envisage most clearly. Woolf's final novel, posthumously published a little while after she died in 1941, is largely about a play – an am-dram production staged by villagers just before the outbreak of the Second World War – and somewhat informed by her neighbours doing just that in Rodmell, East Sussex. Over the course of a day, the villagers rehearse and undertake the performance in the grounds of a large house. Woolf manages to capture so much with so little: through fragments we learn of lust and longing, ambivalence and ambition and the ability – and futility – of art to make change. Read now, *Between the Acts* still prompts thoughts on our actions during times of great historic conflict.

Wordsworth Classics
ROMEO AND JULIET
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

ROMEO AND JULIET
by William Shakespeare

Wordsworth Editions, £3.99
ISBN 978-1840224337

Plants do a lot of heavy lifting in Shakespeare's works; the Bard set 29 scenes in gardens, many of them involving secrecy, betrayal, lust or confusion. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is inexorably entwined with the idea of a forest in full flush, for instance, while muddled-up identities run riot in the gardens of *Twelfth Night* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. But perhaps the most recognisable Shakespearean scene takes place in the Capulet orchard, where a lovestruck Juliet calls out for Romeo, unaware that he is hiding beneath her balcony. It is here that they announce their love for one another and make the fatal decision to marry, sparking off endless similar scenes in high-school movies, romance novels and romcoms centuries on. We don't actually hear that much about the orchard itself – these swoony teenagers are far more interested in the matter of their forbidden love – but its 'high and hard to climb' walls have been imagined plenty of times on the stage.

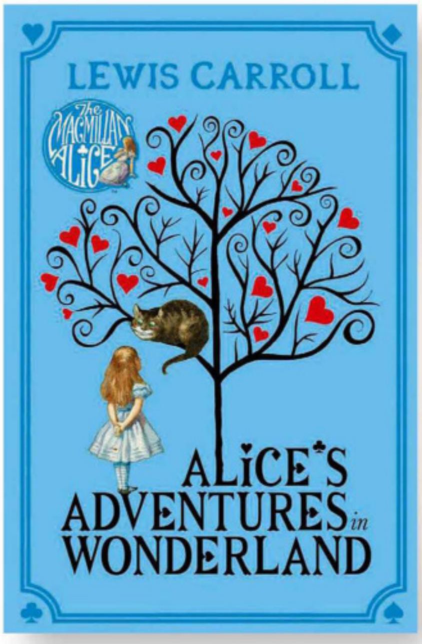


THE GARDEN OF EVENING MISTS
by Tan Twan Eng

Canongate Books, £9.99
ISBN 978-1786893895

Tan Twan Eng's novel won a clutch of accolades after its release in 2012, among them a Man Booker Prize shortlisting and the Man Asian Literary Prize, but the Malaysian novelist is beautifully unshowy in depicting the power of gardens for reflection and memory in *The Garden of Evening Mists*. A love story of sorts unfolds between the former gardener to the Japanese emperor and the sole survivor of a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp. Yun Ling, now a prosecutor of war criminals, has one request of Aritomo, the gardener who lives 'on a mountain above the clouds': that he make a garden for her sister, who died while imprisoned by his employer. He refuses, but instead offers her a two-year-long apprenticeship. As Yun Ling learns, so does the reader: of the sacrifice involved in making a stone garden, of the value of borrowed landscape and, most of all, of all that a garden can hold beneath its surface.

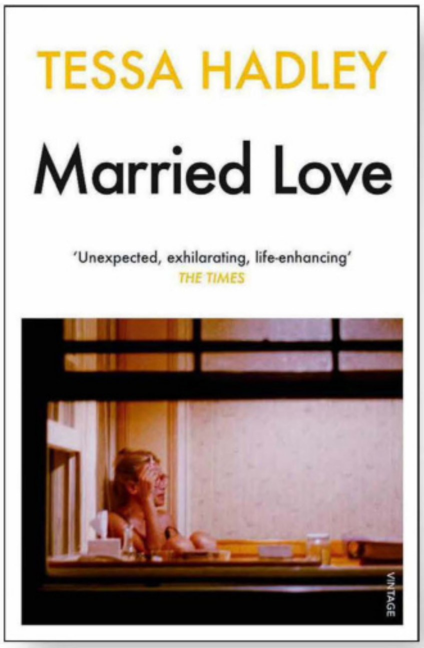
Tan Twan Eng is beautifully unshowy in depicting the power of gardens for reflection and memory



ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND
by Lewis Carroll

Macmillan Children's Books, £5.99
ISBN 978-1447279990

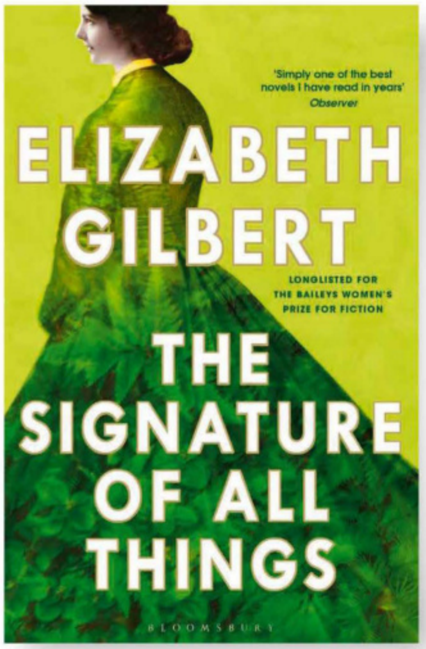
Down the rabbit hole we go! Whether starting from the dreaming spires of Oxford or descending into the psychedelia of Wonderland, the gardens conjured on the pages of Carroll's well-loved children's books are among the most famous in literature. Readers of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* may find her quest frustrating: all those liquids that make her smaller or bigger, caterpillars that lead her (cognitively, at least) astray, and tea parties that never seem to end. But read the novel with the view that the garden itself is the answer, and Carroll spins a story that captures an experience familiar to many gardeners: one of beauty, growth, mystery and challenge. If we can't get curious in our own gardens, where can we?



MARRIED LOVE (BECAUSE THE NIGHT)
by Tessa Hadley

Vintage, £9.99
ISBN 978-0099570189

Nobody writes about homes and gardens like Tessa Hadley. Across her many short stories and novels, the domestic exists as a perfectly drawn backdrop for love affairs, heartbreak, delight and despair – all the more compelling for happening between seemingly ordinary people. *Because the Night*, one of the short stories in her *Married Love* collection, is a fine example of Hadley's ability to capture a sense and a feeling – specifically, that of the smell and mystique of a greenhouse to a small child. Throughout her work, gardens are scenes of events: under the cover of darkness, all manner of things can happen. But here our child protagonists are held perfectly – and poignantly – on the cusp of a moment of change and loss of innocence. You read it and smell tomato feed rising from the page.



THE SIGNATURE OF ALL THINGS
by Elizabeth Gilbert

Bloomsbury, £9.99
ISBN 978-1526626561

Best-selling modern sage Elizabeth Gilbert is perhaps more immediately known for her heartbreak memoir *Eat, Pray, Love*, but this historical novel set in the era of botanical exploration is one that I still think about years after reading. Published in 2013, Gilbert brings a rare and vital female perspective to the Victorian boom in plant science. Alma Whittaker, born in 1800, is the clever daughter of an exotic plant titan with facial features as sharp as her mind. She becomes a pioneer in studying mosses, her studies and curiosity taking her to Europe, Peru and Tahiti from the snowy estate of her chilly Pennsylvanian upbringing. Gilbert extracts such realism from the plant worlds Alma encounters that it is impossible to read this book without harbouring a new-found respect for moss, but she is equally skilled at depicting Alma's inner life: that of a human with as much longing and desire for human company as she has for botanical understanding.

> Carroll spins a story of beauty, growth, mystery and challenge. If we can't get curious in our own gardens, where can we?

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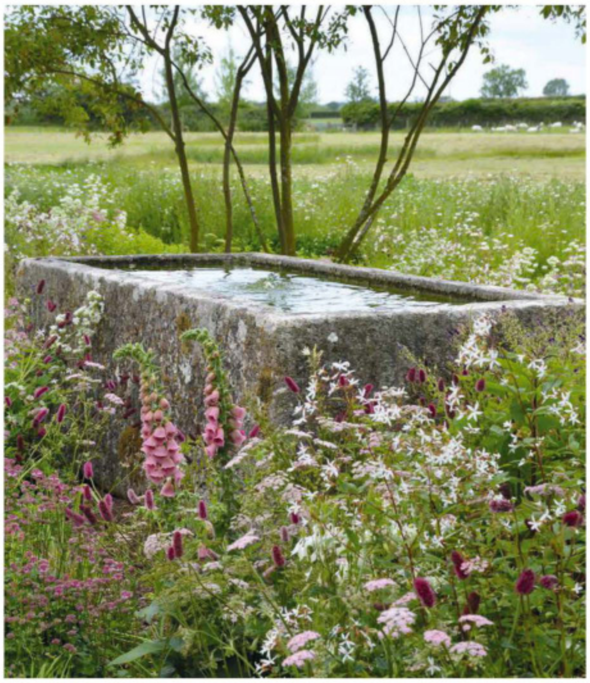
— GARDEN ANTIQUES —



FINE GARDEN ANTIQUES
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National Trust

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nationaltrust.org.uk/overbecks-garden

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Education Guide

Are you looking to change career, gain accreditation or simply learn more about your passion? Choose the best option for you from our selection of full-time, part-time and short courses.

Images clockwise from top left: Getty/darrya, Maskot, Jacky Parker Photography, BartCo

THE PLANT SCHOOL

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The Plant School is the leading independent provider of education for students wanting a grounding in plant knowledge – all the courses are focused on learning about plants and trees with lectures by leading plantsmen. Courses have been running for many years and cover the theory and practice of plants and their origins, from how to identify them to choosing the best species and cultivars for our gardens. This is covered by expert lecturers topped up with visits to plant collections.

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- Taking places for September 2024

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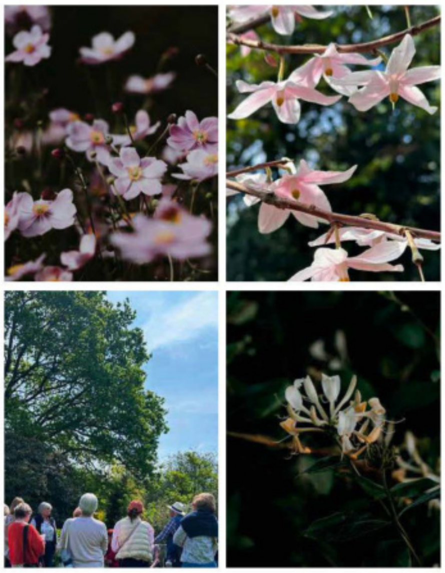

Garden Masterclass

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- We commission films about exceptional gardens and their creators.
- Our membership scheme (which includes students) offers discounts on webinars and recordings and access to an extensive online library.
- Some of what we do is free! Thursday Garden Chat is our weekly public service broadcast at 6pm London time. All are recorded for YouTube and website viewing.

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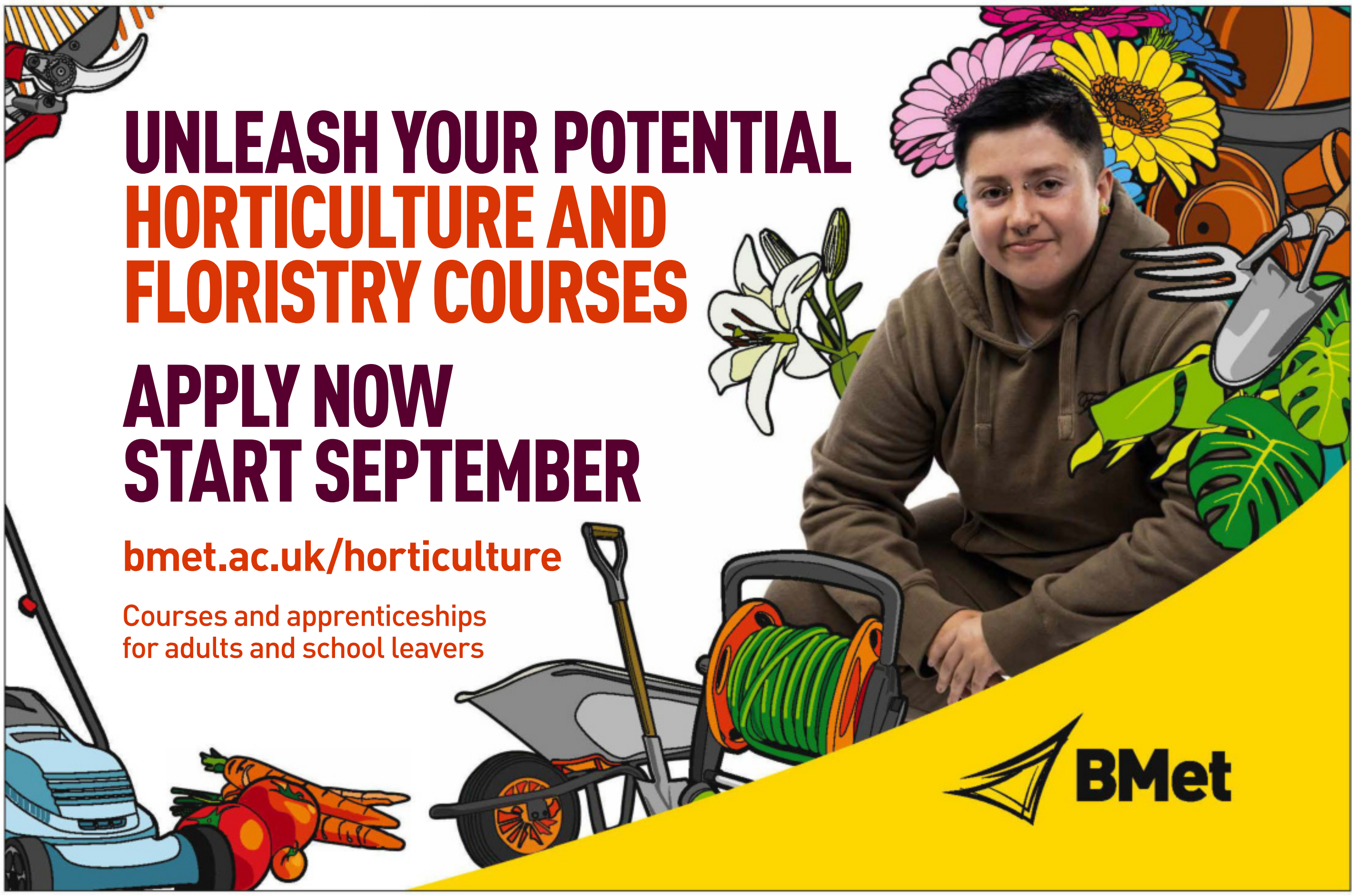
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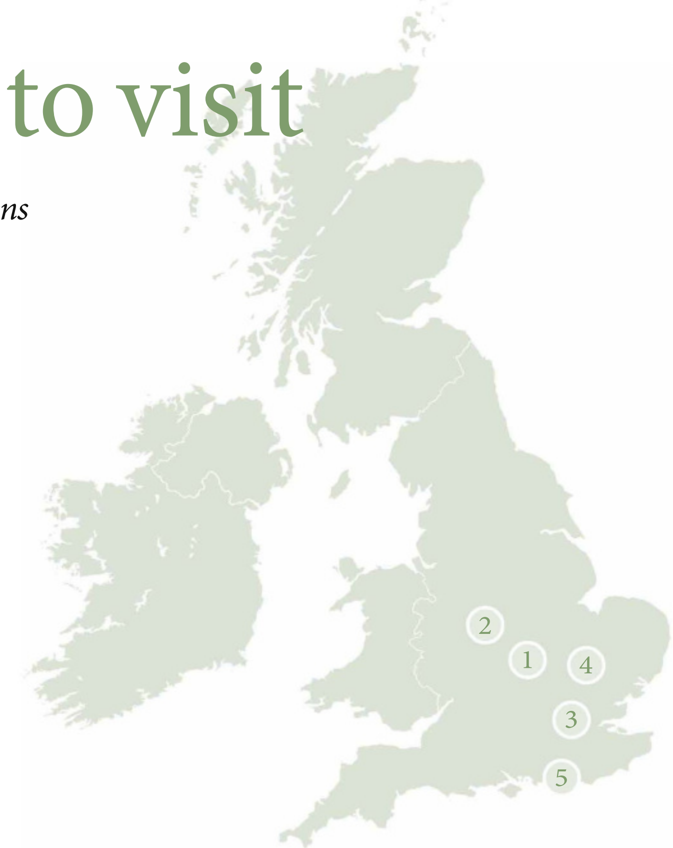
Summer gardens to visit

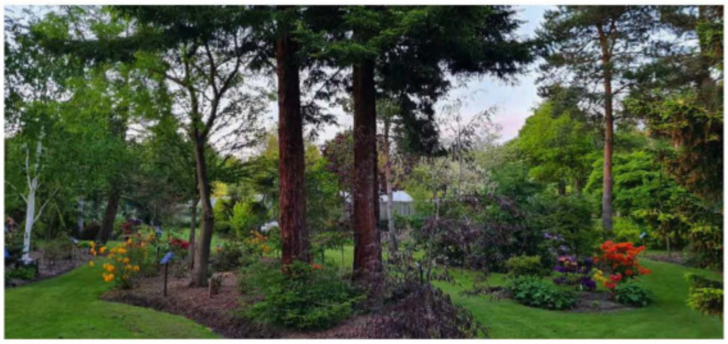
Summer is a great time to visit this collection of glorious gardens

1 COTTESBROOKE HALL & GARDENS

Late summer at Cottesbrooke sees the herbaceous borders flourishing, with phlox, geraniums and campanulas jostling for space among the many roses. In the Wild Garden, the giant gunneras, rodgersias and ferns are at their peak, providing a lush, shady escape from the heat.

Northamptonshire NN6 8PF | 01604 505808 | cottesbrooke.co.uk





2 BLUEBELL ARBORETUM & NURSERY

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Smisby, South Derbyshire LE65 2TA | 01530 413700 | bluebellnursery.com

3 CHELSEA PHYSIC GARDEN

London's oldest botanic garden is five minutes from the popular King's Road in Chelsea. This four-acre garden is open to visitors Sunday – Friday, and Flexi Tickets are bookable online that are valid for up to three months. Perfect for the changeable British weather! More about tickets and special events on the website.

London SW3 4HS | chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk

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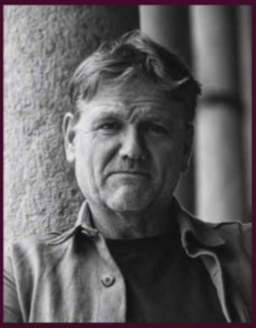
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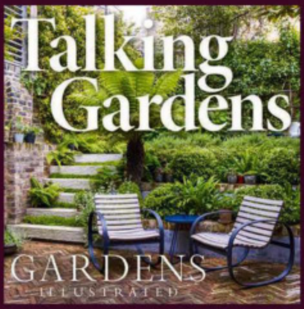

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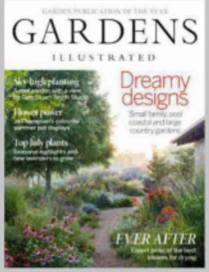

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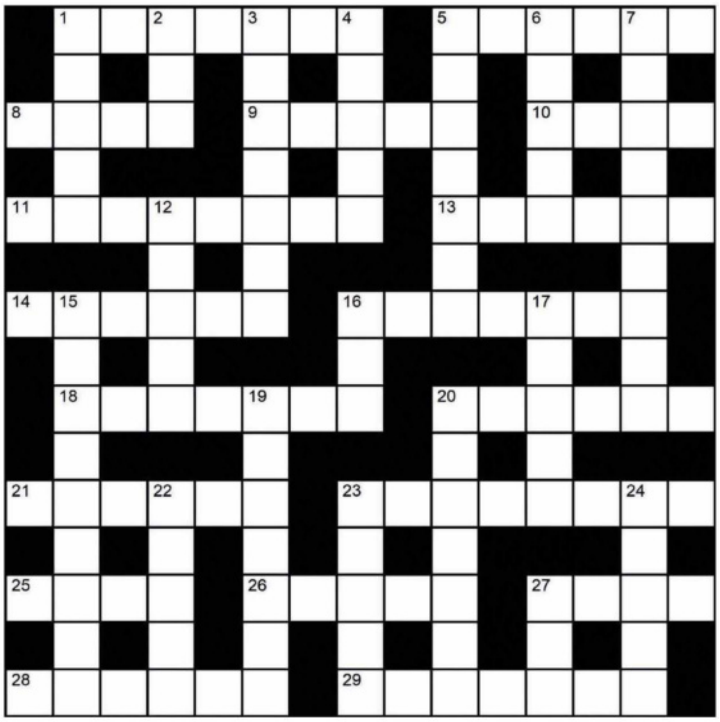
Crossword



ACROSS

1 Genus of 'Handkerchief' and 'Dove' tree – turns Ida avid (7)

5 Cover celery stalks to turn them white (6)

8 *Juncus* is the genus of this grass-like plant – hurry! (4)

9 ___ pelargoniums, with dark markings on round leaves – included in quiz on alpines (5)

10 Vegetable in *Colocasia* genus – not quite a fortune-telling card (4)

11 Genus of medlar fruit – impels us to change (8)

13/3 down A *Cordyline australis* with green/cream striped leaves – 'English Riviera Stunner'? (6,7)

14 See 16 down

16 Made sound like eg wind-blown honesty seedpods (7)

18 A partly opened eglantine, say (7)

20 Like an aphid's honeydew secretion (6)

21 See 23 across

23/21 Common name of flowering shrub *Chaenomeles japonica* (8,6)

25 As weeping willow branches do (4)

26 Equivocate about a bushy boundary (5)

27 Detect a sign of leaf rust? (4)

28 ____ *nobilis*, the Mediterranean bay tree (6)

29 That of *Ulex* (gorse) pops in hot weather (4,3)

DOWN

1 Stone fruit of eg plum (5)

2 Initially, very many hope for RHS's highest horticultural award! (3)

3 See 13 across

4 The alder genus (5)

5 Genus of eg cep mushroom – but sole sort? (7)

6 Family of daisy-like flowers including *Eurybia* and *Symphyotrichum* (5)

7 Umbelliferous pungent herb … carried on changing (9)

12 *Prunus* ___, the wild bird cherry tree – sort of a spud! (5)

15 Genus of common purslane – Carol put out one (9)

16/14 across It's a mite troublesome in the greenhouse! (3,6)

17 Scotland's most exotic botanic garden (5)

19 Trees in Fagaceae family said to be seaside features (7)

20 A super-sized poppy with picotee petals – excellent (7)

22 Christmas rose is *Helleborus* ___ (5)

23 *Cercis siliquastrum* is the ___ tree, associated with a traitor (5)

24 Another name for *Gladiolus* is ___ lily (5)

27 Plant's vital juices (3)

- **Solutions to this issue's crossword will be printed in the August issue**

SOLUTIONS TO JULY CROSSWORD

ACROSS 1 Trillium **6** Sumach **9** Fern **10** Alibi **11** Rare **12** Morel **14** Trailed **15** Braemar **16** Seseli **17** Restio **19** Calamus **21** Miracle **23** Oasis **25** Wren **26** Plant **28** Aloe **29** Palace **30** Aubrieta.

DOWN 2 Rheum **3** Lunaria **4** Ida **5** Moister **6** Stipa **7** Muralis **8** Corydalis **13** Limbo **15** Boehmeria **16** Salvo **18** Torenia **19** Crenata **20** Muscari **22** Copse **24** Sport **27** Tub.

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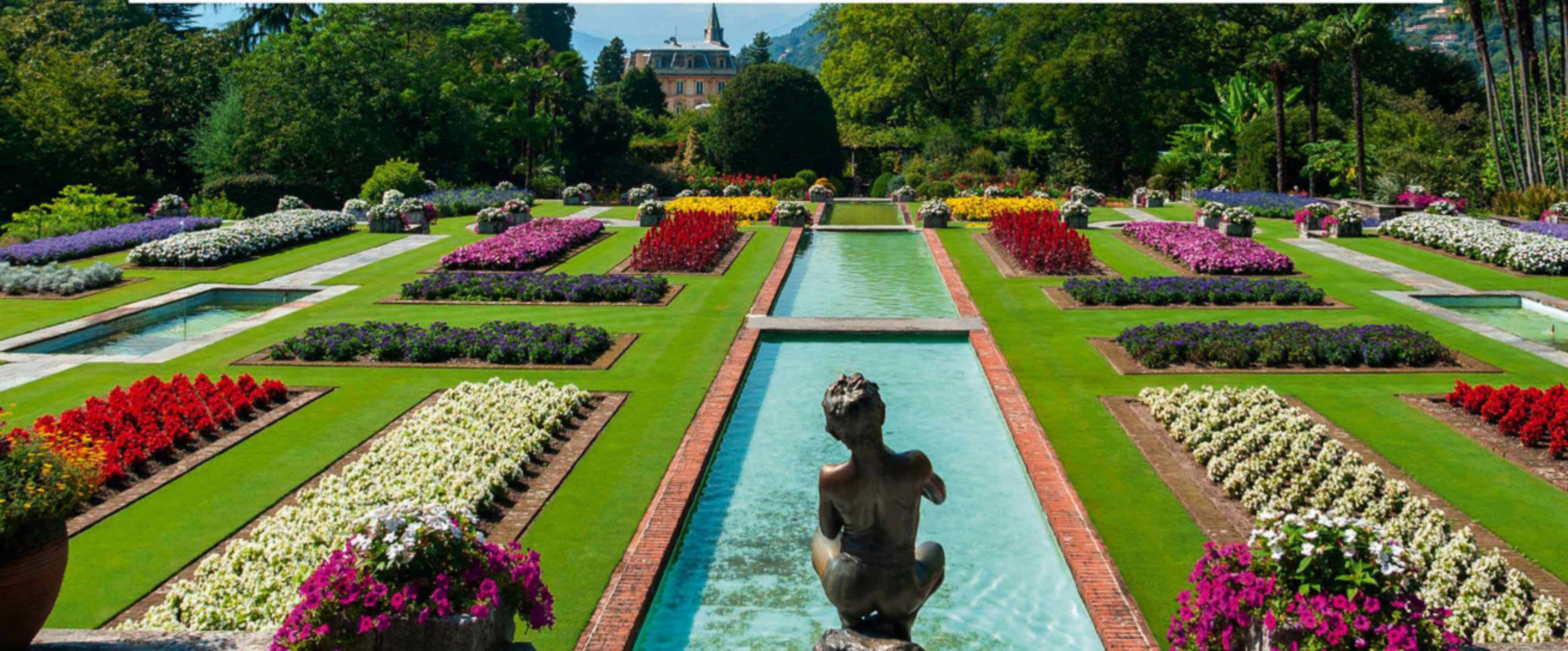

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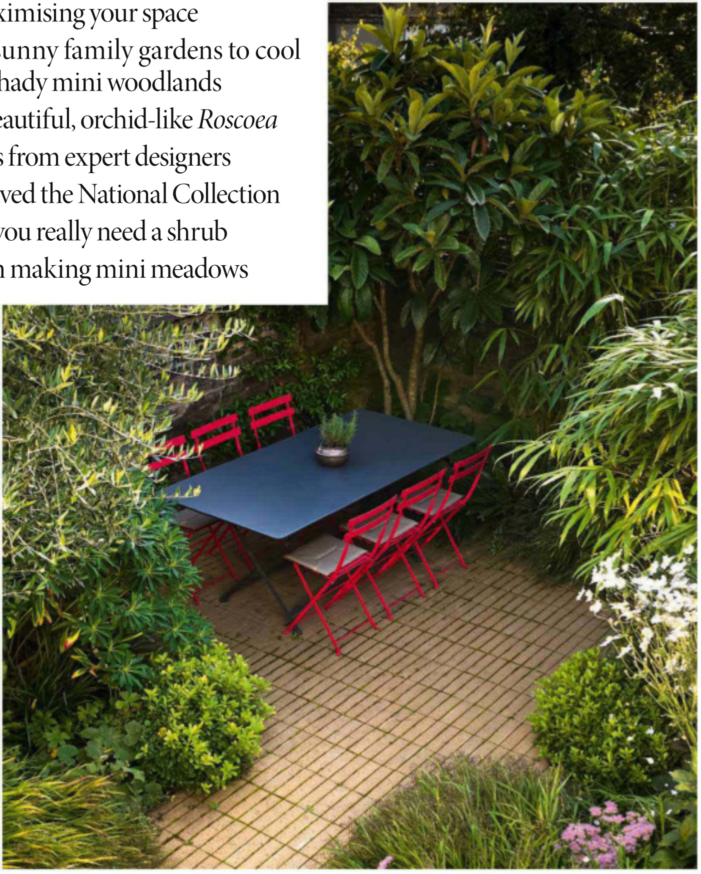
Our August issue is a Small Gardens special edition full of ideas for maximising your space

- Six inspiring spaces from sunny family gardens to cool city courtyards and shady mini woodlands
- Discover the charms of beautiful, orchid-like *Roscoea*
- Top small garden tips from expert designers
- The dahlia rescuer who saved the National Collection
- You want a tree, but you really need a shrub

PLUS Dave Goulson on making mini meadows



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LET'S GET COMPLICATED

We all know about planting for pollinators, says **John Little**, but when it comes to increasing biodiversity, it turns out that it's not all about the plants

ILLUSTRATION ROSANNA MORRIS

For biodiversity, soil and structure are as important if not more important than plant choice

There are some big misconceptions about attracting wildlife into gardens and the best ways to combat the biodiversity loss crisis. The reality may seem surprising and counterintuitive. For example, shopping trollies that are dumped in water actually boost biodiversity. Brownfield sites and allotments are really great places for wildlife. And 20 per cent of our most important sites for nature are linked to mineral extraction.

When you go to your local garden centre over the weekend and look at the products promoted as being for wildlife, you'll probably find a table of pollinator-friendly plants, which is fine. But in my dream garden centre's wildlife corner, the next thing down the line on your table of wildlife materials would be a pile of sand. Take it home, tip it out and immediately, just by doing that single act, you've created a new substrate and a bit of topography that will pull in ground-nesting bees and solitary wasps and all sorts of other wonderful wildlife.

Structure in a garden is totally undervalued. I use local sand and construction waste to vary the nutrient levels and drainage in my garden, and adding piles of various materials adds to the mix of microclimates. This is so important with the climate crisis upon us. If you are a bee in a flat field with no topography or structure and the temperature gets too high, you have nowhere to go.

Next along the line at the garden centre would be a pile of logs; essentially, dead stuff. Dead logs and rotten timber are great – as are corpses, but you hopefully won't find any of those at your garden centre – and are a massive part of a functioning ecosystem, but are hardly ever designed into a landscape. Let's 'plant' more dead trees and build more dead hedges. You can stack a pile of logs on the surface of the soil, but you will also want to dig a hole and stack logs upright in it to create damp wood and dry wood and standing dead wood.

Further along the row in our garden centre, there are some old pipes. Take a pipe home, block the end off and fill with vegetation and water, and it becomes a lagoon – which is a rather glamorous phrase in the conservation world for a stagnant piece of water – and you will then attract a lot of hoverfly larvae species. You can't get those beautiful hoverflies without getting the mildly sad-looking, rat-tailed maggot larvae first. Strap the lagoons to a tree, if you're lucky enough to have one, or a fence, or bury it slightly in the ground, and then you are mimicking the hollows in trees and temporary stagnant pools that would have been all over the place naturally.

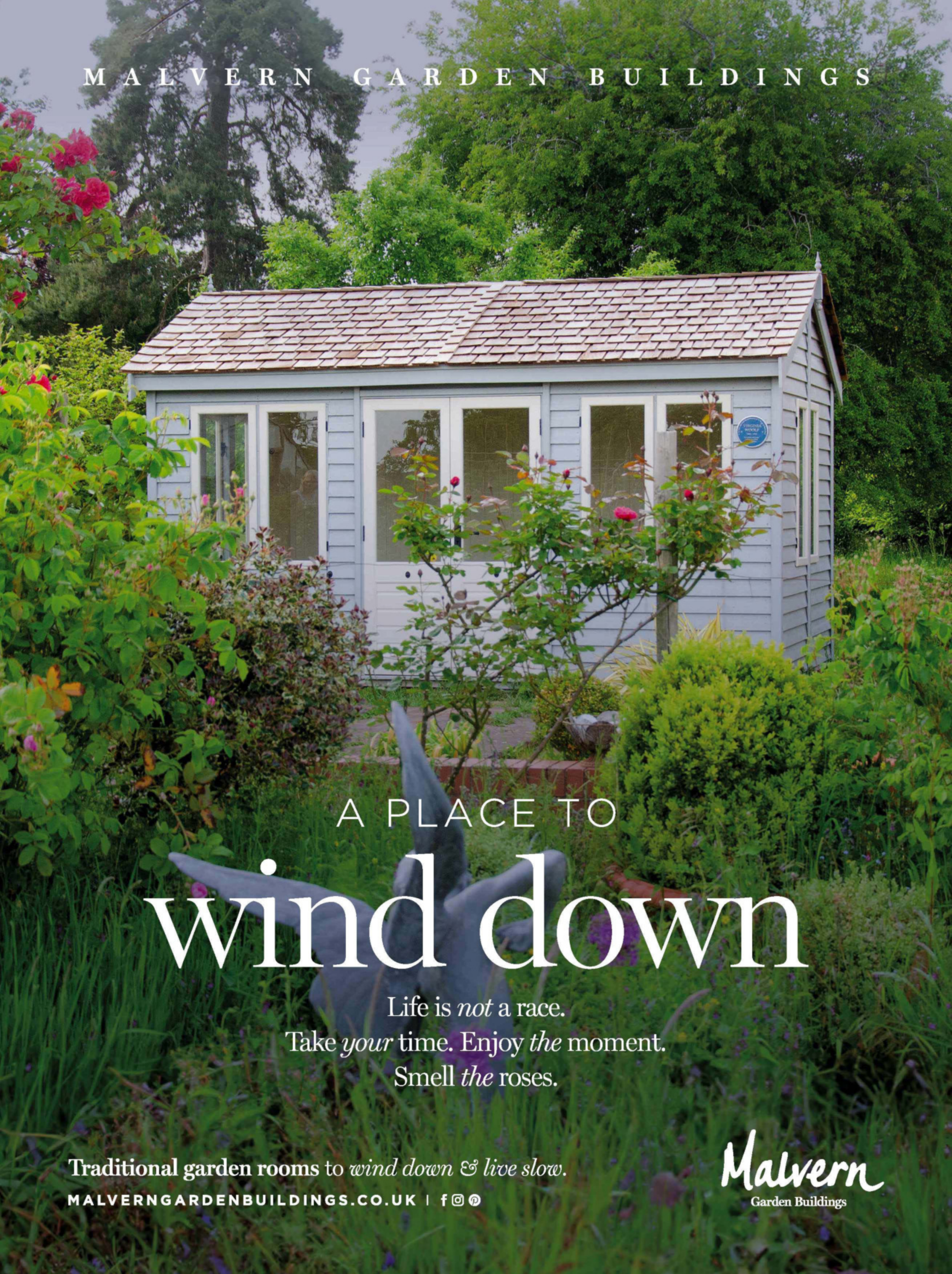
Right at the end of the wildlife table, there's a spade. Take it home, dig a hole and make a mound. By doing this, you've changed the topography, moved the topsoil and concentrated it in one place, and made a very damp area at the bottom of the hole and a nice dry area at the top of your mound.

From a garden point of view, by doing this you are giving yourself more plant choice, but from a biodiversity point of view, it drives everything, because you've immediately created a more complicated, niche space with more microclimates. Don't make everything flat. Flat things are the enemy of biodiversity. As soon as you change the topography of a landscape, you improve the biodiversity potential of that landscape. As soon as you dig that hole and make that mound, you add to the opportunities and niches for wildlife in your garden. So move topsoil, expose subsoil, disturb things, leave some areas bare.

For biodiversity, these things such as soil and structure are as important if not more important than plant choice. It turns out that when we're designing a garden and thinking about how we can make it better for wildlife, we need to think about how we can make it more complicated.

So when you next visit your garden centre looking for wildlife products to buy, and find no bags of sand or rubble, no stacks of dead wood or corpses, and you're not allowed to take the shopping trolley home with you to litter your own pond, maybe ask them to rethink their wildlife-friendly merchandise. ☐

- Follow John Little on Instagram @grassroofco for updates on open days at his experimental brownfield garden Hilldrop in Essex.



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